

PREFACE

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This volume presents results of field researches and subsequent laboratory studies of ten years investigations in the Pleistocene Dandiero (Buia) Basin successions.

We are very glad for the opportunity to publish this collection of papers as a supplement of the *Rivista Italiana di Paleontologia e Stratigrafia*. We offer a special thank to editorial committee of the journal and especially to the Editor in chief, prof. Maurizio Gaetani, who must have been worried as to whether the volume would finally be completed in such a short time, but has steadily offered advice and support. For their invaluable help in the review and editing process of the volume, sincere appreciation is extended to: M. Armour-Chelu, R.L. Bernor, F. de Lapparent de Broin, D.P. Domning, D. Frayer, A. Galiberti, F.C. Howell, I.P. Martini, M. Pickford, J.C. Rage, A. Tagliacozzo, D. Weaver, as well as to other anonymous reviewers.

Our field work researches in the northern Danakil area began in late 1994 as a joint project between the Asmara Department of Mines and the University of Florence, mainly focused on geological survey and regional geology ("*Danakil Horst and adjoining areas*" Project). The first surveys in late 1994-early 1995 led to the identification of a Plio-Pleistocene fossil mammal-bearing succession located 20 km south of Buia village in the northern Danakil (Afar) depression. The interest for the area increased by the discovery, in late 1995, of an almost complete human cranium as well as several sites with widespread and abundant Oldowan and Acheulean tools. Since the discovery of fossil mammals, paleoanthropological and archaeological remains, the project become of much wider interest and it has been enlarged to include further collaboration: the National Museum of Eritrea (which is in charge of safeguarding the national cultural heritage), the Archaeology & Anthropology, Biology and Departments of the University of Asmara, as well as other Italian and European Institutions within a "new" project (the *Buia Research Project*), approved by the Research Committee of the University of Asmara.

The Buia project activities are not limited to developing research, but also are aimed to provide adequate capacity building. A Buia Field school has been set up and has been dealt for two seasons (2002 and 2003). We are proud that some of the students that where attending the first Buia Field School, were in charge as graduate assistants in the following years activities. The project aims also to create a base for an adequate laboratory in the National Museum of Eritrea. It is important to stress in this regard that the entire preparation of fossil material (cleaning, preparation, moulding and casting) has been realised in Asmara in the recently refurbished laboratory. The activity of the Buia Project, giving equal importance to developing structure and capacity building and research, is considered pivotal for future research projects in Eritrea and for the management of paleontological, paleoanthropological, archaeological and geological heritage of this country.

Financial support, a crucial element of every field research, has been provided by grants from: the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, MAE (Dipartimento per la Cooperazione e la Promozione Culturale); the Italian Ministry for University and Research, MURST/MIUR (national projects Cofin 2001 and Cofin 2003); The Italian Ministry for Cultral Heritage, MiBAC (National Museum "L.Pigorini", Rome); the Italian National Research Council, CNR ("*Comitato 05 - Scienze Geologiche e Minerarie*" and "*Progetto Finalizzato Beni Culturali*"); the Leakey Foundation; the PeryThetys Program; the University of Florence; The University "La Sapienza", Rome; the Florence Museum of Prehistory.

A ten-years-long research endeavour like this has been only possible through the support and assistance of many institutions, colleagues and friends, in a number impossible to list herein. We thank the President of the University of Asmara, Dr. Wolde-Ab Yisak, and the Chairpersons of the University of Asmara Research Committee (a position charged in time by Dr. Azie Obkbaghebriel, Dr. Ghebrebrham Oqubazghi, and Dr. Zemenfes Tsighe) for their constant interest and support

to the project. The Italian Embassy in Asmara offered constant help and sustain. Alem Kibrab and Tesfami-chael Keleta (Department of Mines, Asmara) continuously provided, along these years, sincere friendship and invaluable logistic support. Several friends and colleagues in Asmara have been of great help in various manner during these ten years work and deserve a special mention: Andrea Fedi (ANFE); Daniel Johannes and Guglielmo Chiocciara (Geoscience). Along the last years, numerous colleagues have been of precious help

for discussion and assistance during various phases of the project activities: A. Azzaroli, M. Benvenuti, V. Borselli, S. Cencetti, N. Cipriani, R.J. Clarke, G. Contini, F. Cozzini, F. Crivellaro, F. Fanfani, G. Ficarelli, P. Ghetti, F. Landucci, M. Marcucci, M. Menotti, P.A. Mohr, P. Passerini, M.L. Puccetti Azzaroli, D. Torre, M. Vidale, M. Zanaga.

Finally, a special mention for the people of the village of Buia, for their warm hospitality and friendship.