

ALEXANDRIA

POLISH-EGYPTIAN PRESERVATION MISSION AT KOM EL-DIKKA 1994-1995

Wojciech Kołataj

New developments in the form of the final purchase by the Supreme Council of Antiquities of an area of 1,750 m² adjacent to the Kom el-Dikka site from the neighboring military unit and its turning over to the Mission for archaeological exploration and future incorporation into the archaeological park project necessitated a new approach which would take into account the new reality. Consequently, the meeting of the High Committee of the SCA and the Polish side convened to approve a work plan for the coming three years, originally planned for late autumn 1994, could not take place until the spring of 1995. On May 25, 1995, the High Committee met at Alexandria and approved the three-year program and budget for the Mission.

Meanwhile, the former military area was cleared of the stone enclosure wall and the three army garages recently built on the site, leaving two to be adapted as the mission's workshop, stores and cloakrooms (total area of 45 m²). Clearing work has been started and trees planted along the new enclosure wall. Mechanical means are suggested to remove the upper layers deposited here in the 18th century during the construction of the Napoleonic fort (c. 15,000m³ of earth).

Conservation work carried out between October 10, 1994, and May 28, 1995, covered the following areas (Fig. 1):¹

¹ The Mission comprised: Dr. eng. arch. Wojciech Kołataj (director); Dr. Grzegorz Majcherek, archaeologist; Dr. Janusz Smaza, sculptor-conservator. The Egyptian side was represented by SCA inspectors of antiquities: Mr. Ahmed Moussa, Mr. Ala ed-Din Mahrous, Mr. Ashraf Abdel Raouf Ragab, Mr. Mohammed Abdel Hamid Ismail and Mrs. Mona Said.

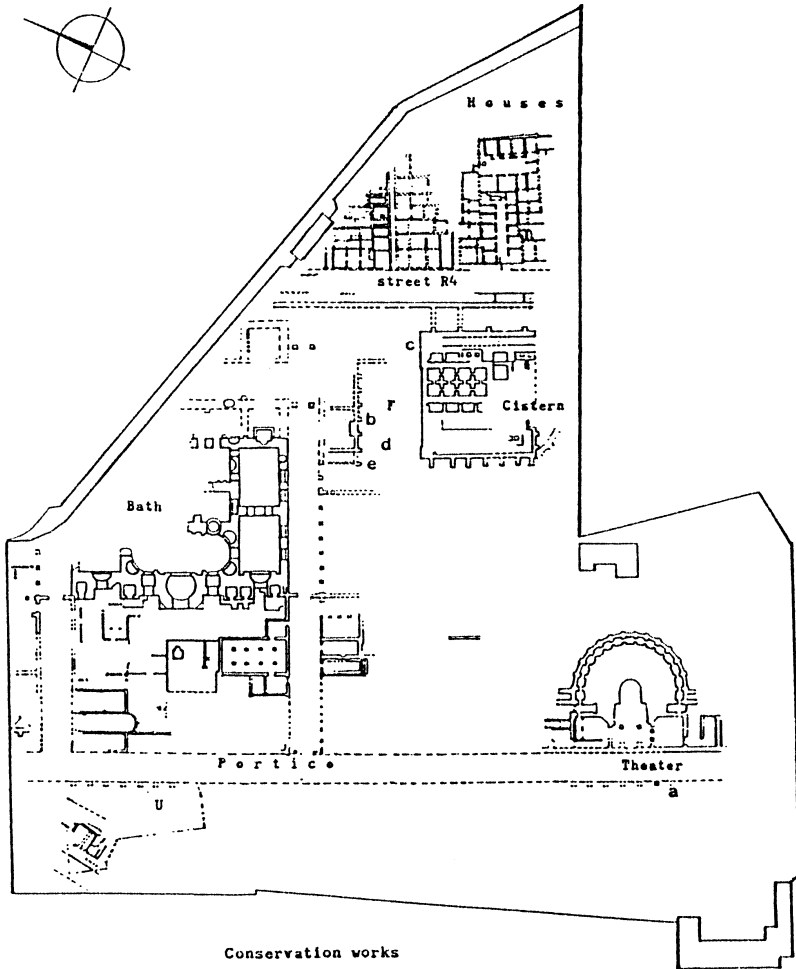


Fig. 1. Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka site.

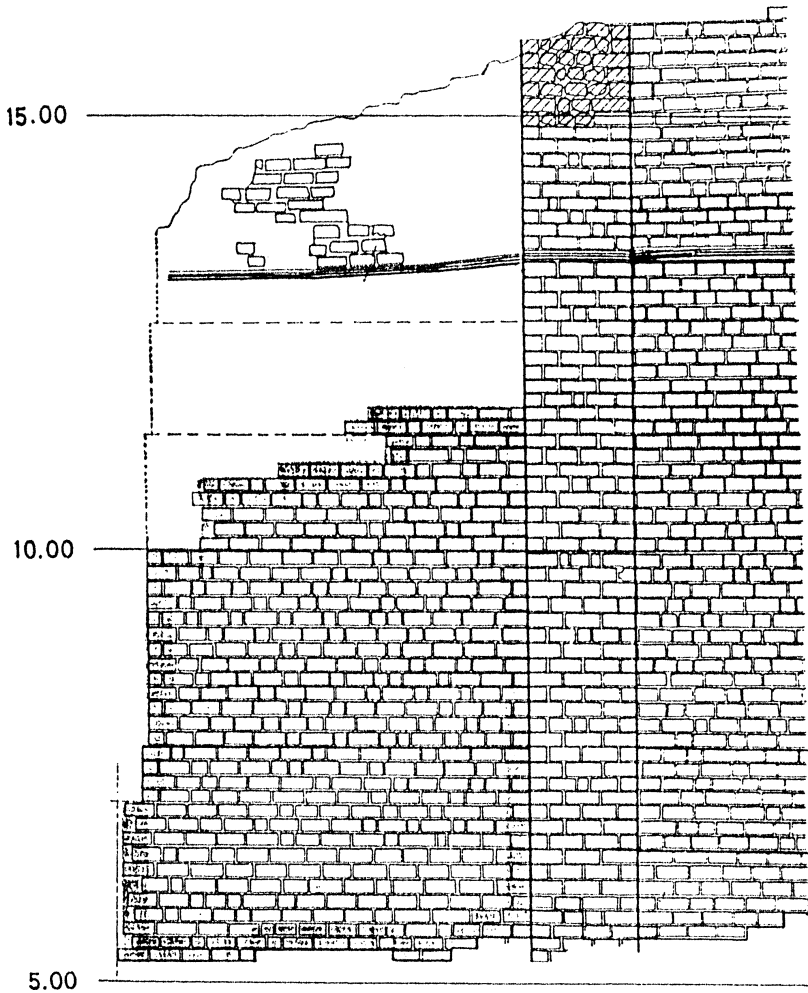


Fig. 2. Cistern – east wall.
 Design and reconstruction J. Borkowski and W. Kołtąj.

THEATER

The southern end of the portico foundations was investigated in view of the necessity to move the standing column 4.18 m to the south; it was found that consolidation work is needed before any further work is attempted (Fig. 1:a).

A base of Helwan limestone under the next column of the portico to the north was completed; work progressed on yet another one.

Three blocks from the Theater audience were prepared in Helwan limestone; they will serve to replace the fast eroding part of the audience seats reconstructed in 1967 in inappropriate material (Mokattam limestone).

The fragment of the outer wall of the Theater in trench MXVI was subjected to preliminary conservation.

BATHS

The part of the foundations of the wall of the southern passage of the Baths beside the eastern corner of the southern gymnasium was investigated and revealed the presence of a passage leading from the underground service area outside to the south (Fig. 3).

A base was made of artificial stone (make-up same as published in previous reports) and the last two columns of the southern portico were re-erected, thus completing the work in this area.

The third buttress of the southern outer wall of the baths was reconstructed (c. 150 m³).

This will allow for a viewing platform to be arranged in this place, overlooking the Roman villa with mosaics discovered between the Baths and Cisterns (Fig. 1:b).

CISTERNS

Work continued on the eastern facade of the structure with 26 m² of the southern end of this elevation being restored in preparation for the reconstruction of the corner; work on this facade of the structure will be completed by the end of 1995 (the work is

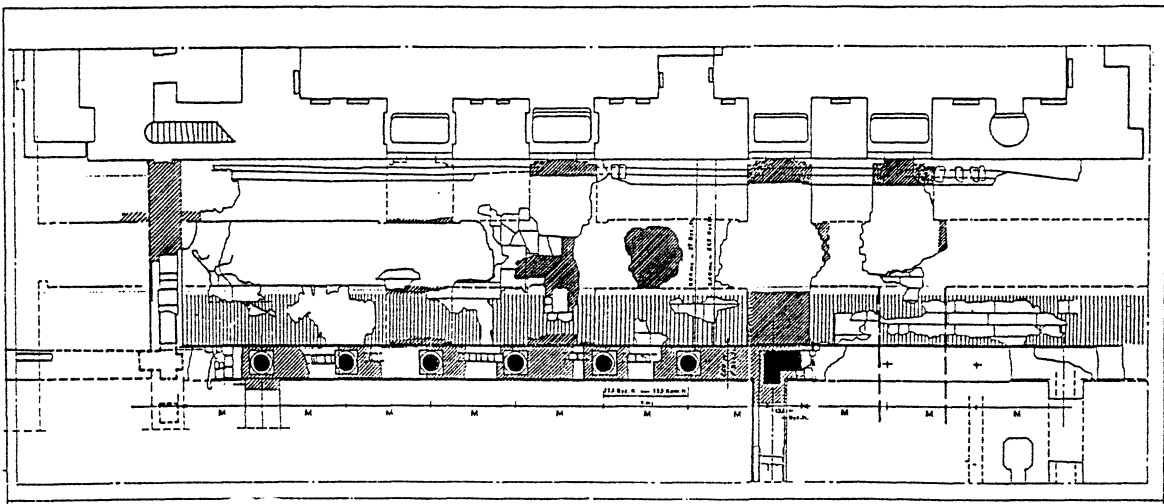


Fig. 3. Baths - southern portico. Reconstruction W. Kolçtaj.

carried out under difficult conditions in extremely narrow trenches up to 8 m deep; Fig. 2).

The corner of the northern elevation of the cisterns was consolidated (c. 6 m²) beginning work on this side (Fig. 1:c).

The southeastern corner of the building, destroyed in the earthquake of AD 441, was cleaned and investigated.

SECTOR F

The preserved sections of the vaults of the Roman villa of 2nd-3rd century date were consolidated.

The cracked and endangered parts of walls were protected, introducing supports where necessary.

An overhanging part of the southern wall of the Baths was taken down and prepared for anastylosis in the coming season.

Work began on uncovering the next two ruined buttresses of the southern outer wall of the Baths (Fig. 1:c).

SECTOR U

No work was undertaken in this sector during the season.

HABITATION QUARTER

Sections of the casing wall lining the eastern (c. 6 m²) and the southern (c. 8 m²) extremities of the trenches were erected, following the borders of the site.

A section of the street adjacent to House G was investigated in preparation for conservation measures to be undertaken in the future.

Progress in conservation and preservation activities received both photographic and drawing documentation.

A complete review of conservation work carried at the site by the Polish Mission over the years will be published as a volume in the *Alexandrie* series published by the Polish Academy of Sciences.