

# Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski

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## Marina El-Alamein: Season 2000

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# MARINA EL-ALAMEIN

## SEASON 2000

Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski

*A month-long campaign was carried out in March in the area of the Western Necropolis and the ancient town center.<sup>1)</sup> In the necropolis, work concentrated in and around the tombs that had been partly excavated in previous seasons or identified by means of geophysical prospection in 1999 (Fig. 1).<sup>2)</sup> The investigations, which are aimed at recording fully the tomb architecture and evidence of funerary rites, are carried out in a manner that protects the extant historical substance in anticipation of systematic consolidation measures to be undertaken in the future. In the town, trenches were opened in the north-central part, where bulldozing works in 1985 had exposed a stretch of limestone pavement.<sup>3)</sup>*

1) The present campaign lasted from March 1 until March 27. The team directed by Prof. Dr. Wiktor A. Daszewski comprised Mrs. Iwona Zych, Mr. Mikołaj Budzanowski, Mr. Adam Jegliński, archaeologists; Mr. Michał Smoła, architect; Prof. Dr. Maria Kaczmarek, physical anthropologist.

The Supreme Council of Antiquities was represented by Mr. Abdel Latif el-Wakil, Director of the Region. We owe him great thanks for his daily help on the site. The Mission would also like to express its deep gratitude to the SCA Authorities for their continuous interest and support of our work.

2) W.A. Daszewski, *PAM XI, Reports 1999* (2000), 39-46.

3) Cf. W.A. Daszewski et al., *MDAIK* 46 (1990), 5, fig. 2, no. 5 on the contour map.

MARINA EL-ALAMEIN  
EGYPT

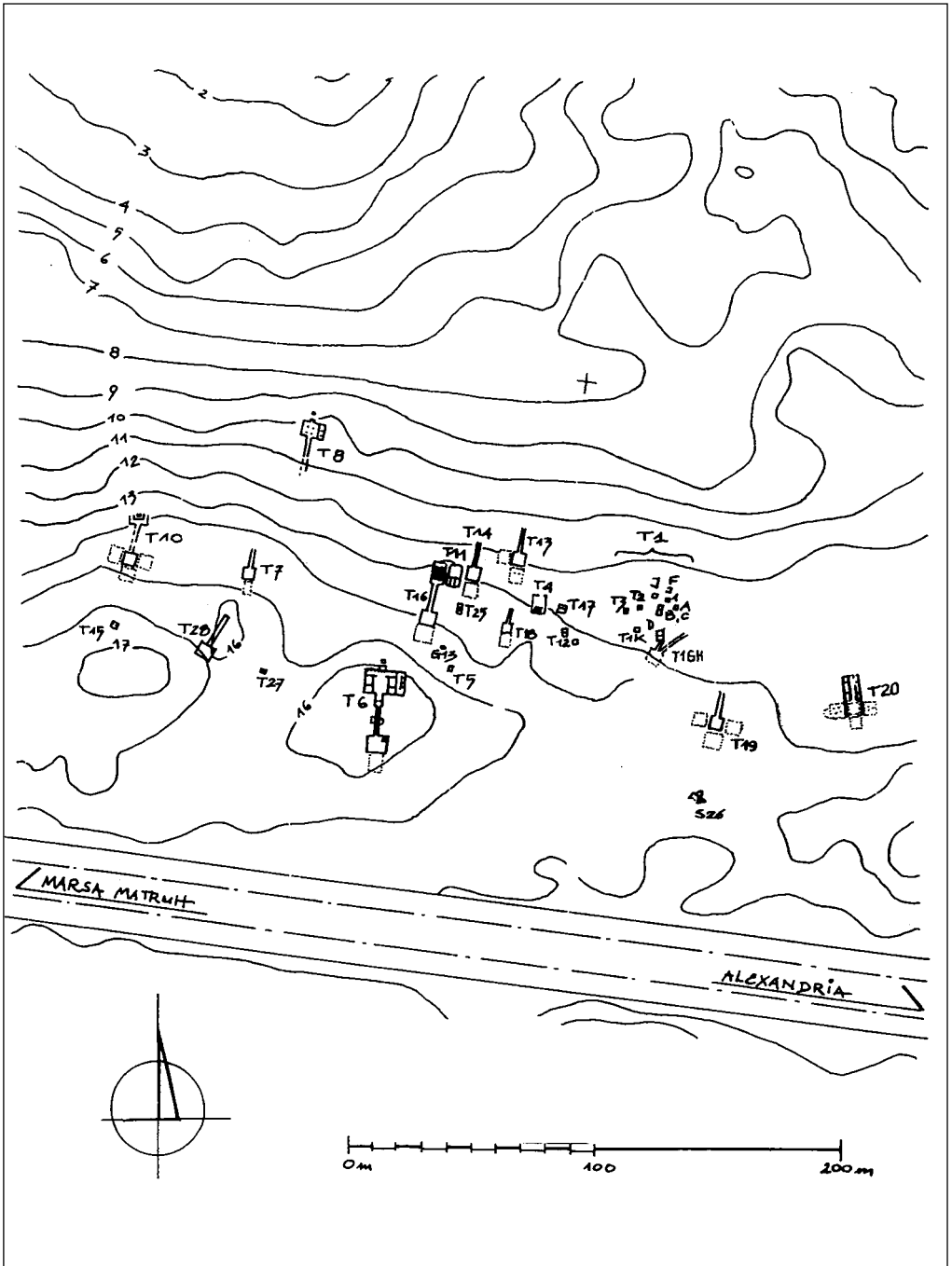


Fig. 1. Marina el-Alamein. Plan of the necropolis (Drawing Polish Archaeological Mission: K. Kamiński, A. & J. Dobrowolski, with later additions and revisions)

## TOMB 25

A pillar-type tomb with two loculi in the central box and another two loculi, added later to the south and north sides respectively, had been uncovered in the previous season (*Fig. 2*).<sup>4)</sup> At the time, its architecture had been recorded provisionally, leaving the loculi unopened pending anthropological examination of the human relics in the current campaign.

In the central box, both loculi proved nearly empty, the bones having disintegrated almost completely due to the humidity. There were no relics in the southern loculus, while in the northern one minor pieces of tibia bones and the parietal parts of the skull were uncovered, pushed far back to the rear of the tomb, indicating

that this burial must have been disturbed (plundered?) in antiquity. In the loculus added to the central box on the south only three fragments of the femoral bones of an adult were uncovered.

The loculus added on the north proved more promising. Several successive burials were identified. Some 20 cm below the top of the sand fill, a fairly damaged skeleton of a woman in her twenties was found, superimposed on 40 cm of sand fill, below which there were four other skeletons, one of a woman, the remaining of men. Next to the lowermost male skeleton, two glass bottles (*Fig. 3*), of a type frequent in Marina tombs dating from the 1st century AD, were discovered by the head. The



*Fig. 2. Tomb 25. Altars for offerings in front of the central and northern loculi, view from the east (Photo W.A. Daszewski)*

4) Daszewski, *PAM XI*, op. cit., 41-45.

skull was found resting upon a flat stone, as if on a cushion. This manner of supporting the head of the deceased has already been noted in several other tombs.

In front of Tomb 25, at a distance of 0.65 m from its facade and on a level corresponding to the footing of the tomb, three altars made of stones testify to offerings being made for quite a long time. The altar in front of the central pair of loculi, roughly rectangular in shape and 0.43 m high, was made of a flat limestone slab (0.65 x 0.43 m) set upon a square base of stones (cf. Fig. 2). The altars in front of

the north and south loculi were smaller and made of flat stones put together to form a roughly square shape. A second level of altars was found superposed over the first one, repeating the position of all of the original altars except for the southern one. The new altars were situated some 50 cm higher up and slightly further away from the tomb facade. They were obviously erected when the first set had been engulfed by sand. The tomb must have been in use for a long period of time, notably from the later part of the 1st to the 3rd century AD.

## STRUCTURE 26

Geophysical prospection carried out with the Dielectric Echo System in the necropolis area in 1999 indicated the

presence of a large rectangular structure oriented NE-SW and provided with a sort of "dromos" on the north.<sup>5)</sup> Best visible at

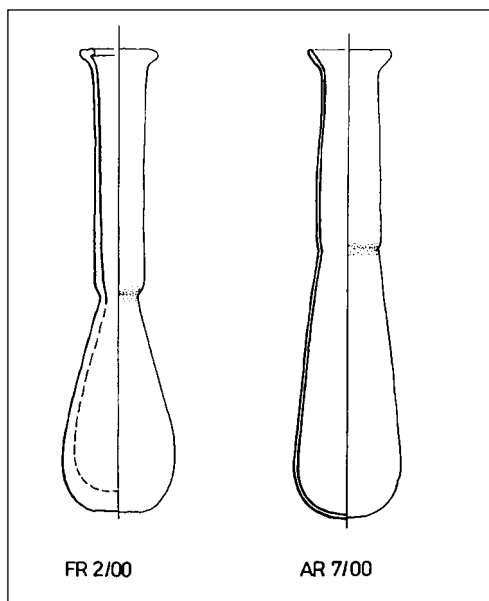


Fig. 3. Glass bottles from Tomb 25.  
First century AD  
(Drawing I. Zych, inking M. Smoła)



Fig. 4. Structure 26. View from the southwest  
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)

5) Daszewski, PAM XI, op. cit., fig. 2.

a depth of 2 to 3 m below ground level, the structure lay about 23 m to the south of Tomb 19. During the present campaign three trenches were opened to verify the results archaeologically. At a depth of about 0.40-0.50 m below present ground level, what looked in geophysical readings like the open-air court of a large hypogeum proved to be an unfinished rock-cut space (*Fig. 4*). The bottom was excavated at a depth of 2 to 2.20 m. The north wall (6.15 m long) was uncovered in full and parts of the western (2 m) and eastern (c. 0.50 m) walls were also cleared. A recess (3.5 m long and 1.60 m wide) hewn in the upper middle part of the north wall, in the form of two steps to a depth of respectively

0.40 m and 0.80 m from the top of bedrock, was apparently intended as a dromos, but was never completed. Neither was the northeastern part of the structure completed. The triangular space between the north wall and the unfinished east one was also left unfinished in the form of four steps, measuring from top to bottom: 0.42 m, 0.35 m, 0.30 m and 0.30 m respectively. Several dressed limestone blocks (each approximately 0.79 x 0.30 x 0.23 m) were found nearby upon the floor. The fill within and above the structure consisted of pure sand except for a 30-cm thick uppermost layer of compacted soil mixed with limestone gravel. No potsherds were found.

### TOMB G 13

Another trench verifying the results of geophysical prospection was opened some 15 m south of Tomb 25. About a meter below present ground level, a simple "prism" grave was revealed: 2.75 m long (E-W); 1.65 m wide (N-S) and 0.35-0.40 m high. The tomb consisted of a poor enclosure wall of irregular limestone slabs standing upright

around a pile of sand and small stones. The enclosure was probably made above a trench cut in the rock underneath, containing the actual burial.<sup>6)</sup> The grave was not explored this year. The few sherds of amphorae found in the sand fill around and above the grave date to the 2nd cent. AD (Mareotis AE 3, Dr. 2-4 (Italian or Spanish), Mau 27/28).<sup>7)</sup>

### TOMB 27

A box-like tomb with two loculi was found 29.80 m southeast of hypogeum T 7 and 29.90 m west of hypogeum T 6. The structure is rectangular in plan (L. 2.65 m (E-W); W. 2.00 m (N-S)). The southern loculus ranges from 0.47 to 0.67 m in width, the length being 2.26 m. The northern loculus is 2.30 m long and 0.60 m wide. Dressed limestone blocks

used for the walls are approximately 0.60-0.65 m long, 0.35 m wide and 0.30-0.33 m high. The tomb is preserved to a height of 1 m (*Fig. 5*). It appears to have been plundered and partly damaged in the past. The covering blocks of the southern loculus were found removed except for the last one at the rear. It is not clear whether originally there were only two loculi or

6) For other such graves, cf. W.A. Daszewski, *PAM VI, Reports 1994* (1995), 28-31.

7) All amphorae from this tomb and from other structures excavated this season were examined and identified by Dr. Grzegorz Majcherek, who will be publishing this material.

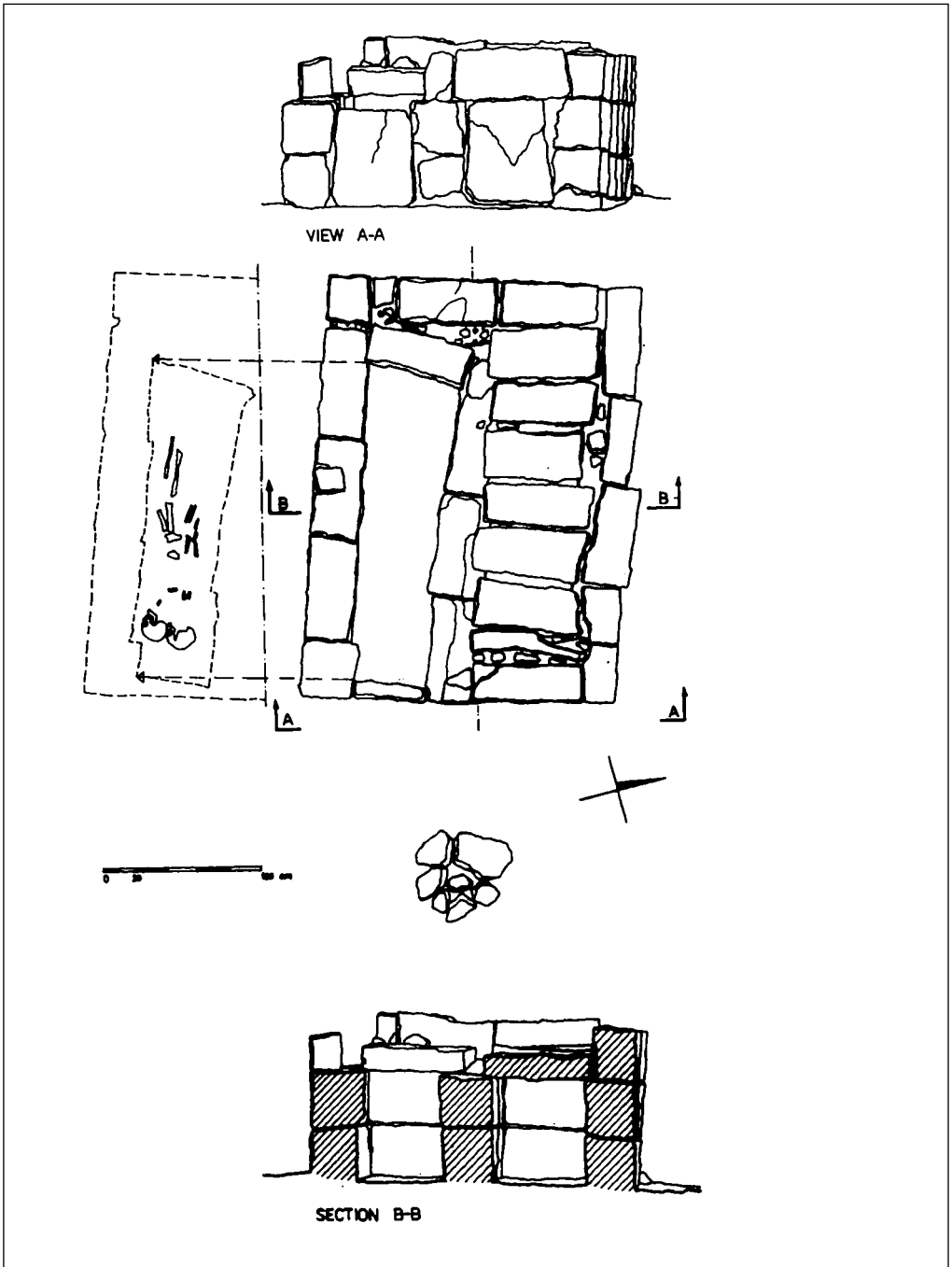


Fig. 5. Tomb 27. Plan and views  
(Drawing M. Smota)

four in two superimposed rows, and what the top of the tomb had looked like. In its present state of preservation, it is impossible to ascribe the tomb securely to any particular type. It might have been similar to T 4 with four loculi or was decorated with an upper (pillar-like?) structure.<sup>8)</sup> No trace of either have been found. One thing that is certain, however, is that there must have been some kind of superstructure (more loculi ?) on top. For one thing, the blocks covering the northern loculus did not ensure sufficient protection to the corpses inside, not having been fitted very well. And another thing, the lateral walls of the structure projected 18-20 cm above the level of these blocks.

Only the southern loculus was explored. It was found to contain two skeletons, one of a woman, aged 25-30, the other of a child, 4-6 years old. No grave goods accompanied the bones.

However, amphorae and tableware sherds, as well as some glass and lamp fragments were scattered all around the tomb, mostly in a layer of sand rising some 30-40 cm above bedrock. The concentration of broken pottery, especially of storage vessels, was the biggest around two fairly irregular altar-like structures made of flat slabs of limestone, some 0.80 m east of the tomb facade (*cf.* Fig. 5). One such altar was found in front of the central part of the tomb at a level corresponding with its floor, the other one, 15 cm higher up, in front of the southern loculus. Traces of burning marked the stones, and ashes were scattered all around. Further traces of burning were found directly upon bedrock, i.e., the level upon which the tomb had been erected. From this level comes the bottom part of a Cypriot Sigillata plate form P.12 of the

late 1st-early 2nd cent. AD, and a lamp of the same date (Fig. 6) recovered in pieces but mended to reveal a fine discus decoration in the shape of an oak-leaf and acorns wreath. In the sand fill above, tableware was represented by an ESA plate of the early 1st cent. AD. In the higher parts of the fill, many fragments of amphorae of the 2nd and 3rd cent., mostly Mareotis AE 3 and AE 4, were found all around the tomb. Other amphorae types included Gaza (Ashkelon), Knidos, and a few sherds of Mau 27/28. It may well be that the tomb originated from the period indicated by the early ceramic finds, but remained in use for quite some time. This is clearly indicated by the second altar erected at a higher level, when the first one, standing almost upon bedrock, had already been covered with windblown sand.

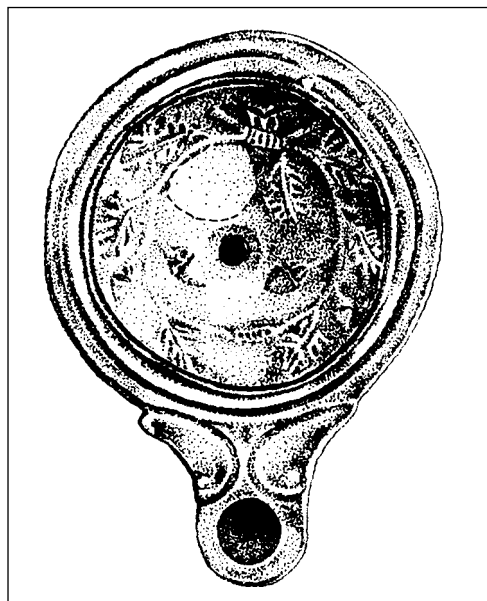


Fig. 6. Oil lamp from the vicinity of Tomb 27 (Drawing I. Zych, inking M. Smoła)

8) Tomb 4, however, had a temenos wall surrounding the box with loculi, *cf.* Daszewski, *MDAIK* 46, op. cit., 30, pl. 15, h.



## TOMB-HYPOGEUM 6

Excavations were pursued in and around the aboveground mausoleum of the tomb.<sup>9)</sup> Trenches were opened along the east, south and west sides, revealing directly below a thin layer of windblown sand two to four courses of such blocks, on the east (Fig. 7), and west, and partly on the southeast of the building. Many of the blocks were severely weathered by winds and heavy winter rains. Significantly, very few blocks and only one column drum were recovered on

the north side, which had had a colonnade along the facade. More drums may perhaps be located further away from the building, beyond the limits of the narrow trench that was opened along the building's stylobate. Several drums and capitals were previously recovered during the excavation of the portico.

On the southeastern side of the mausoleum, the cleaning of the fill along the south wall brought to light a child's



Fig. 7. *Tomb-Hypogeum 6. Aboveground mausoleum with the fallen blocks of the east wall visible in the sand. View from the north (Photo W.A. Daszewski)*

9) For earlier investigations, cf. Daszewski, *MDAIK* 46, op. cit., 32ff., with plan indicating the numbers designating different rooms; also id., *PAM II, Reports 1989-1990* (1991), 31ff.; *PAM III, Reports 1991* (1992), 29ff.; *PAM IV, Reports 1992* (1993), 28ff.; *PAM VIII, Reports 1996* (1997), 37ff.; *PAM X, Reports 1998* (1999), 43 ff.

grave (G 14) made in a 2nd cent. AD local amphora,<sup>10</sup> protected with a casing of stone (L. 0.82 m; W. 0.40 m; H. 0.35 m) (Fig. 8). The amphora neck had been broken off. Three fairly flat, but irregular limestone slabs were placed on top of the casing for better protection.

Excavations were also carried out in the northeastern part of the mausoleum. In space R 8, located in the very corner of the building, a narrow compartment (0.45 m wide) was uncovered, running N-S along the east wall of the mausoleum (cf. Fig. 7). The west side of this trench, sunk 1.05 m

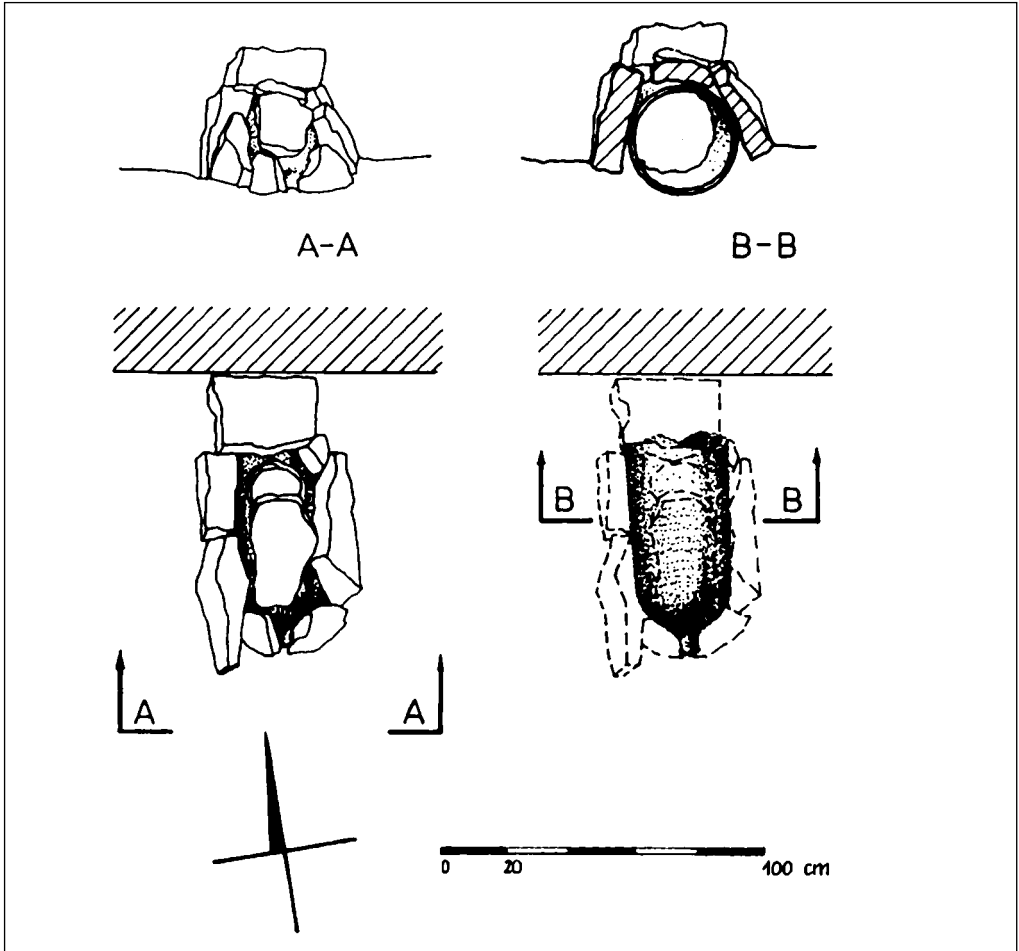


Fig. 8. Child burial G 14  
(Drawing M. Smola)

10) Child burials in amphorae were also found in other parts of the necropolis, for example, between T 1 and T 1B, cf. Daszewski, *MDAIK* 46, op. cit., pl. 13,b. In these cases, however, two lower halves of amphorae had been put together and there was no special casing. Amphorae burials in stone casing were found during rescue excavations in the eastern part of the ancient town, northwest of a Christian basilica., cf. *ibid.*, fig. 2, no. 15 on the contour map, and here fig. 10.

below floor level, was bordered by a solid wall of rectangular blocks. The fill yielded several fragments of 2nd cent. AD amphorae (Kingsholm 117, Mau 27/28, Mareotic AE 3). Near the northeastern corner of the trench, at bottom level, there was a square outlet pierced in the east wall and blocked with two stones. At the other end of the compartment, in the southwest corner, a large opening in the west wall led to the west extension of this structure, which runs under the corridor separating R 8 from R 5 and ends in a blank wall on the west side of R 5. In this part of the trench, a series of amphorae sherds (Gaulish, Mau 27/28, Schoene XIII, Mareotic AE 3, Cretan and Forlimpopoli) datable to the 2nd and 3rd cent. AD were uncovered. There was also a cooking pot and a Cypriot Sigillata bowl form P.22 of the late 1st cent. AD. The trench proved to be the drain of a bipartite latrine, most probably intended for men and women, one in R 8, the other in R 5. A latrine in a tomb mausoleum has not been encountered so far in sepulchral architecture, whether in Marina or anywhere else in Egypt.

On the south of the mausoleum a channel was found pierced through the south wall into R 10, just above floor level and behind the east wall of a small compartment (no. 11), located in the

southwest corner of the room (*cf. Fig. 7*). The channel was inclined northward, that is, into R 10. A large, semicircular abrasion of the lower blocks (from floor level downwards) of the eastern wall of the compartment suggests that some kind of receptacle might have been placed there to collect water (?), which poured into R 10 from the outside by means of the above mentioned channel. The purpose of this arrangement is not clear, unless it was meant for collection of rain water from the roof, thus suggesting the collector character of the channel.<sup>11)</sup> In R 3, the cleaning of the tamped clay floor uncovered a bronze coin of the emperor Domitian. Minted in Alexandria, the piece is dated to the years between AD 84 and 87 (av.: head of Emperor to the right; rev.: Euthenia standing to the left, holding horn of plenty in left hand).<sup>12)</sup> In the layer superimposed on the floor, there were several sherds of amphorae of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cent. AD (Dr. 2-4 western type, Mareotic AE 3, Cretan, Mau 27/28). All these finds confirm our earlier dating of the tomb to the 1st cent. AD and its long use, until at least the 3rd cent. In the later period, however, the mausoleum must have been partly damaged and the lower part of the tomb mostly covered with sand.

## TOMB-HYPOGEUM 28

Another large hypogeum, approximately 25 m long (including funerary chamber), has been uncovered 19.40 m southwest of Tomb-hypogeum 7 and 22.25 m west of T 27 (*cf. Fig. 1*). The tomb belongs to the

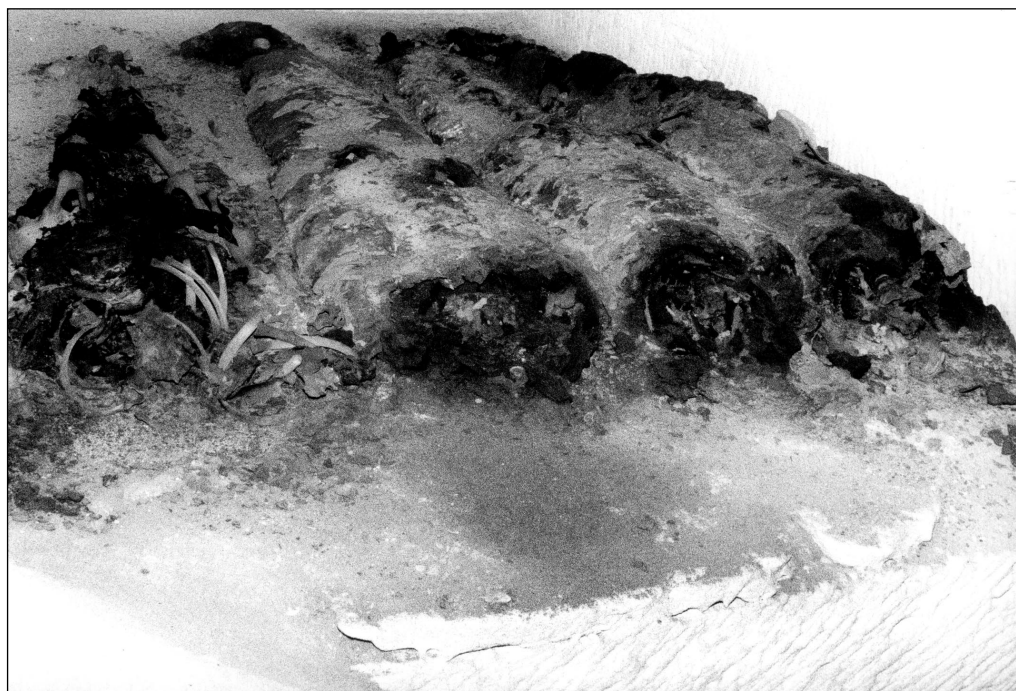
type of hypogeum with staircase, open-air court and funerary chamber(s), but without an aboveground mausoleum. Instead, the staircase (about 1 m wide within the walls, which are each 0.33–0.35 m thick)

11) Collecting rainwater from the roof in an underground cistern was the usual arrangement in the ancient houses in Marina. One of the columns of the inner court was hollowed out sometimes to serve as a pipe, through which water flowed into a channel that led to a cistern under the court. Cf. W.A. Daszewski, *BSFE* 132 (1995), 21 and fig. 12.

12) I am grateful to Dr. Barbara Lichočka for confirming our reading and for her commentary.

terminates on ground level with a rectangular entrance kiosk (3.10 m long, including walls, its width corresponds to that of the staircase). Similar arrangements were previously found in T 18 and T 1GH.<sup>13)</sup> Of the kiosk only the lowermost course of blocks has been preserved. Most of the paved floor has also been plundered. The staircase was vaulted. Part of the vault remains in good condition in the lower section of the staircase, well beneath the present-day ground level. Only the upper part of the open-air court has been cleared of sand in the course of this season. The walls erected upon bedrock to protect the court on all sides from sand blowing in were found to be badly damaged, especially

on the west and north, the ashlar blocks having toppled onto the sand filling the court. This indicates that the slow disintegration of the structure occurred once the court had already been substantially filled with sand. On the south of the court, some 0.50 m below the top of bedrock, the entrance to the main funerary chamber was found. About one meter was cleared, permitting penetration into the chamber. It proved to have been violated in antiquity. All the loculi had been opened, the burials disturbed, many bones displaced and skulls thrown upon the sand filling the chamber. Traces of plundering were quite evident. A faience vessel (urn) had been dropped from a loculus high up



*Fig. 9. Tomb 28. South chamber. Mummy burials with chopped off heads.  
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)*

13) Cf. for T 1GH, Daszewski, *PAM IV, Reports 1992 (1993)*, 23ff., fig. 2; for T 18, Daszewski, *PAM X, Reports 1998 (1999)*, 47ff., and fig. 5.

on the south wall. Pieces of faience and of burned bones (rare evidence of a cremation burial!)<sup>14</sup> were found scattered inside the loculus and upon the sand below. In a loculus on the east wall, three mummies wrapped in several layers of resinated bandages had had their heads chopped off (*Fig. 9*), probably by plunderers looking for valuables. The skulls had been discarded.

It is to be noted that the variety of burial types was considerable, probably depending on the financial situation of the family and/or the rank of the deceased, not to mention different funerary rites (*vide* cremation, extremely rare in this area). Alongside the mummified bodies one finds corpses in wooden coffins or laid out on biers. Fragments of planks were found inside

the loculi and scattered all over the chamber, apparently discarded by the plunderers. Some corpses had been wrapped in resinated shrouds. Anthropological examination of the burials will be continued in the next season. The tomb has been closed pending further cleaning in the future.

Several sherds of different amphorae of the 2nd and 3rd cent. AD were found in the upper part of the sand fill inside the open-air court. These were Mareotic AE 3 and AE 4, Schoene XIII, and Cretan. The fill of the staircase yielded Mareotic AE 3, Dr 2-4, Asia Minor and Cretan amphorae, all types of the 2nd cent. The uppermost layer inside and just outside the walls brought to light a few sherds of Cretan, Mareotic AE 3, Gaza (early form) and Pompei V amphorae, all of the 2nd cent. AD.

## THE TOWN

Investigations were carried out in an area of the town where, years ago, a stretch of pavement (*Fig. 10, no. 5*) made of rectangular limestone had been exposed during leveling works for the main road of the future tourist village. Mounds of debris comprising architectural fragments, such as a voussoir, cornice, as well as a round marble altar (?) with traces of relief decoration, were piled up to the west, and to a lesser extent east of the paving. They indicate the presence of an important edifice here in antiquity. The paving, extending E-W, has been cleared in its eastern part (*Fig. 11*) and found to continue under the mound on the west. It has the form of two parallel sections arranged of blocks in crosswise rows (N-S), forming two passages (?), the southern one approximately 2.75 m and the northern

one 2.50 m wide respectively. Dividing the pavement down the middle is a row of lengthwise slabs (0.33 m wide each) and similar lengthwise rows border the sides. Taken together, the two sections form a kind of large open space (court or square?), lined with some unidentifiable structures, of which only the lowermost courses of blocks remain in place.

On the southeastern side of the paving, a narrow compartment (7.30 x 1.63 m) was erected directly upon the pavement. Only one, the lowest, course of blocks has been preserved. Traces of waterproof mortar indicate that its function had been connected with the use of water. The paving continues to the south, beyond the compartment, for about 2 m, where it is bordered by blocks set lengthwise in the floor. Further to the north, but always on

14) Another faience urn (broken) with traces of ashes and small fragments of burned bones was found in T 13, cf. Daszewski, *PAM IX, Reports 1997* (1998), 67f.

the south side of the paving, the lower courses of some structure made of rectangular blocks, bigger than usual (0.65 x 0.45 m), were uncovered. Here, too, only

the lowest course of blocks has remained in place. The paving forms a recess on the east and west of this structure. The eastern one measures 2.30 x 2.30 m; of the western one

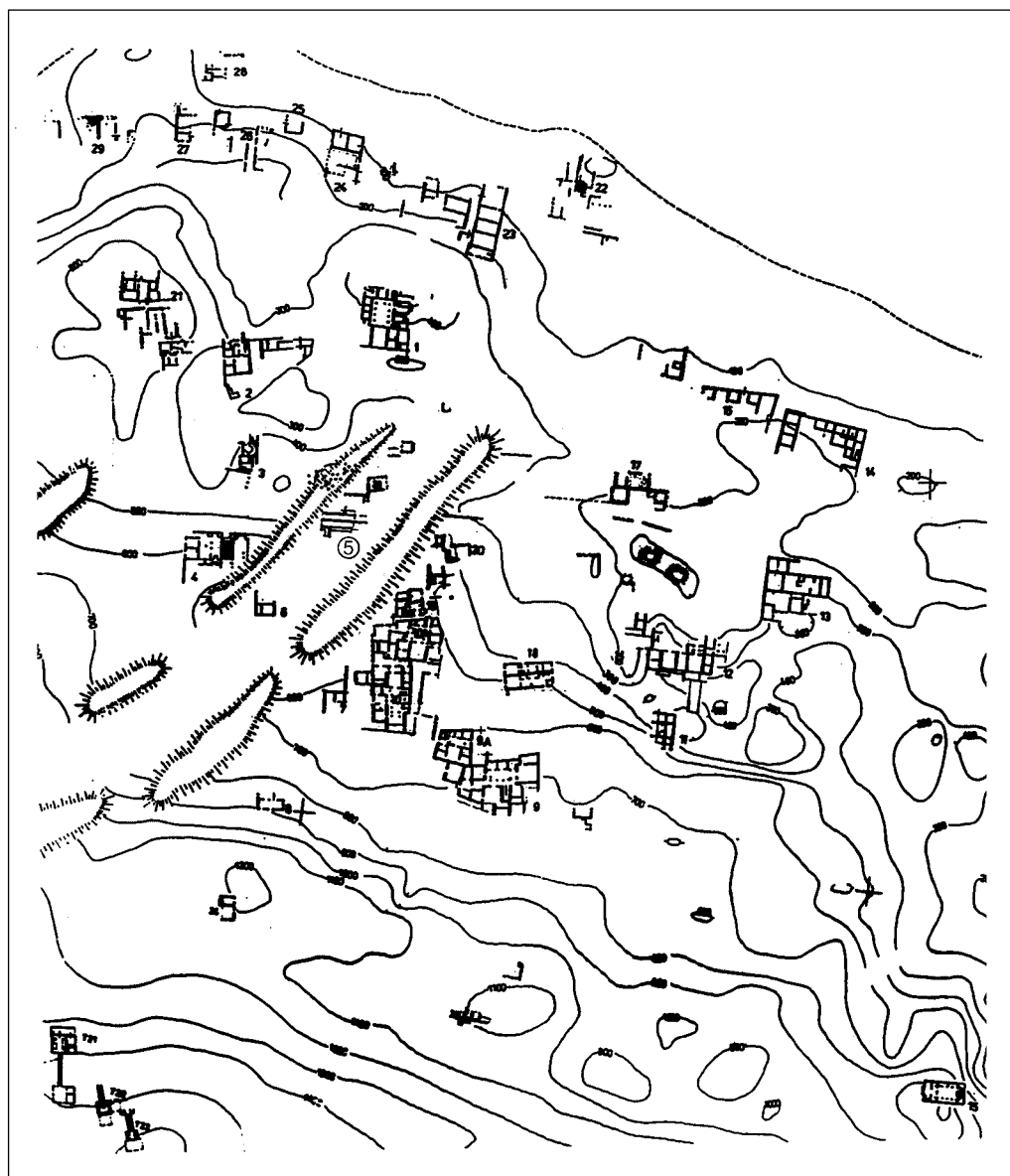
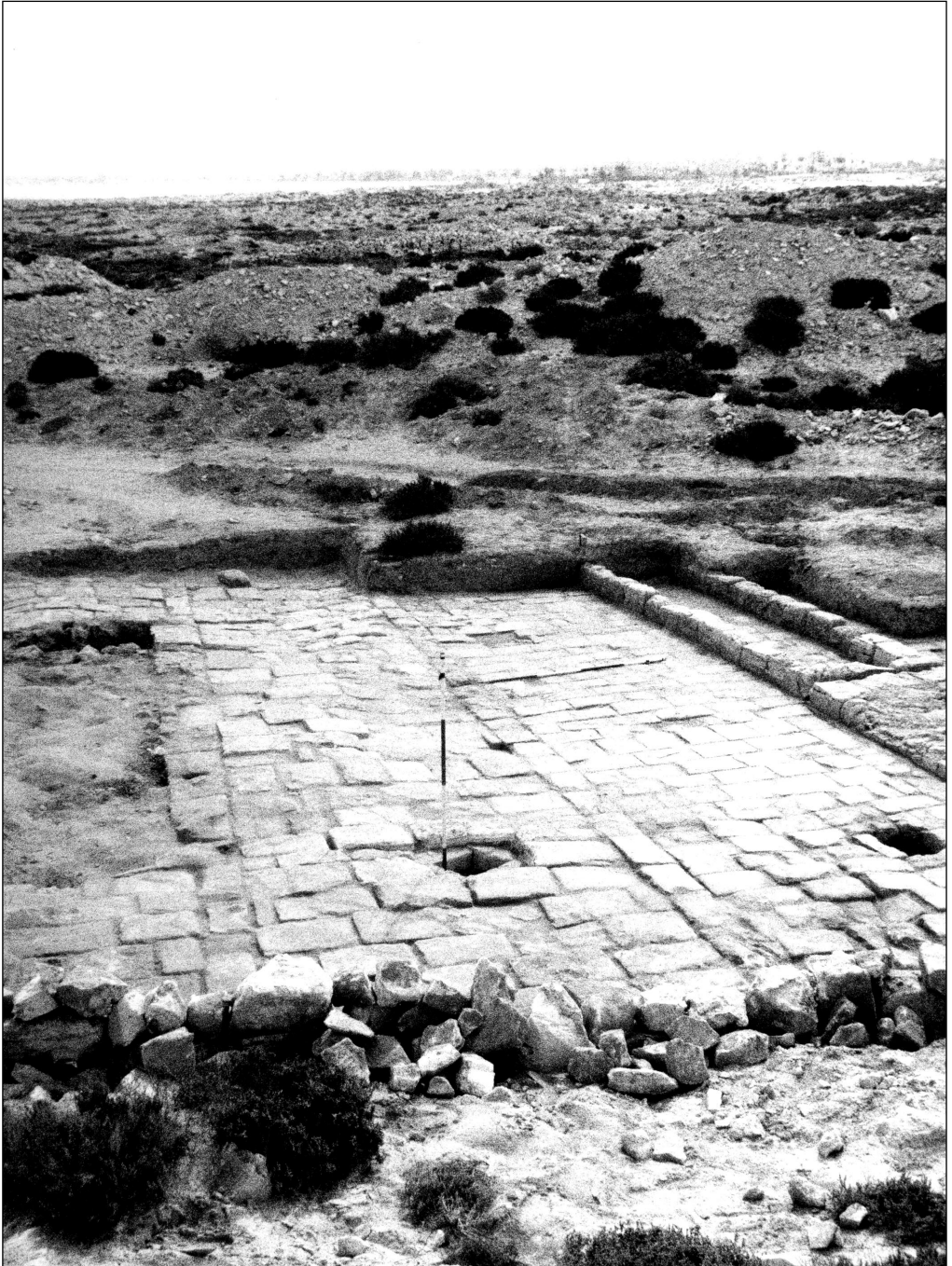


Fig. 10. Plan of town area with the location of substructure no. 5  
(Drawing Polish Archaeological Mission: K. Kamiński, A. & J. Dobrowolski, T. Kaczor)



*Fig. 11. Pavement no. 5 viewed from the west  
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)*

only a fragment at the foot of the mound of debris has been cleared so far for a distance of about 3 m.

On the east the paving is bordered with a continuous row of crosswise blocks of limestone, beyond which an occupational level of tamped soil was recorded at a slightly lower level.

On the west, the paving continues under a huge mound of debris, making further excavation impossible for now. However, in order to check the extent of the structure, a probe was opened on the other side of the mound, 29 m further to the west. The spot chosen for the probe lies at the hypothetical crossing of a line that is a theoretical extension to the west of the central "ridge" of lengthwise blocks dividing the two sections of the already uncovered part of the pavement and, on the north, the line of the inner wall of a peristyle court, a small part of which had been uncovered in previous years during salvage excavations carried out south of a tholos bath (cf. *Fig. 10, no. 3*).

Approximately 1 m below the present ground level, a wall corner was found. The pit revealed that at least one (i.e., southern) section of the paving continues from east to west all the way to this point, where it abuts the paving of the eastern section of the peristyle. It seems thus that a paved street, about 3.40 m wide, runs here from east to west, bordered by buildings on both sides.<sup>15)</sup> The orientation of these buildings corresponds with the street and the "square". In its western section, the street appears to run alongside a big building located on the south side, tentatively identified as a civic basilica (cf. *Fig. 10, no. 4*) partly uncovered during rescue excavations carried out by the SCA in 1987. On the east the street seems to continue towards the houses (cf. *Fig. 10, no. 20*) on the other side of the east mound of debris. However, no further traces of paving have been spotted in this direction. Taken together, these facts suggest that the area may well be the town center featuring official buildings erected around it.

15) Cf. remarks concerning streets in the town, S. Medeksza, Marina el Alamein, grecko-rzymskie miasto w Egipcie, in: *Conservatio est aeterna creatio* (Księga dedykowana prof. J. Tajchmanowi), ed. J. Krawczyk (Toruń 1999), 120ff., fig. 2.