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Marina El-Alamein: Season 2001

Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 13, 73-86

2002

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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MARINA EL-ALAMEIN

SEASON 2001

Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski

A month long campaign¹⁾ was carried out in the Western Necropolis and in the town centre (Fig. 1). In the necropolis the investigation concentrated in and around the tombs identified and partly explored during the previous season. Whenever viable, we have proceeded with a partial reconstruction of walls; where necessary, the structures were covered with a protective layer of sand.

1) The team directed by Prof. Dr. Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski included Mrs. Iwona Zych and Ms Grażyna Bąkowska, archaeologists; Prof. Dr. Maria Kaczmarek, physical anthropologist; Dr. Mieczysław Niepokólczycki, topographer; Mr. Waldemar Jerke, photographer. The Supreme Council of Antiquities was represented by Mr. Abdel Latif el-Wakil, Director of the Marina archaeological site. We would like to express our sincere thanks to him for his unfailing day-to-day assistance. The Mission also wishes to express its gratitude to Prof. Dr. Gaballa Ali Gaballa, Secretary General of the Supreme Council, for his personal interest in our researches.

MARINA EL-ALAMEIN
EGYPT

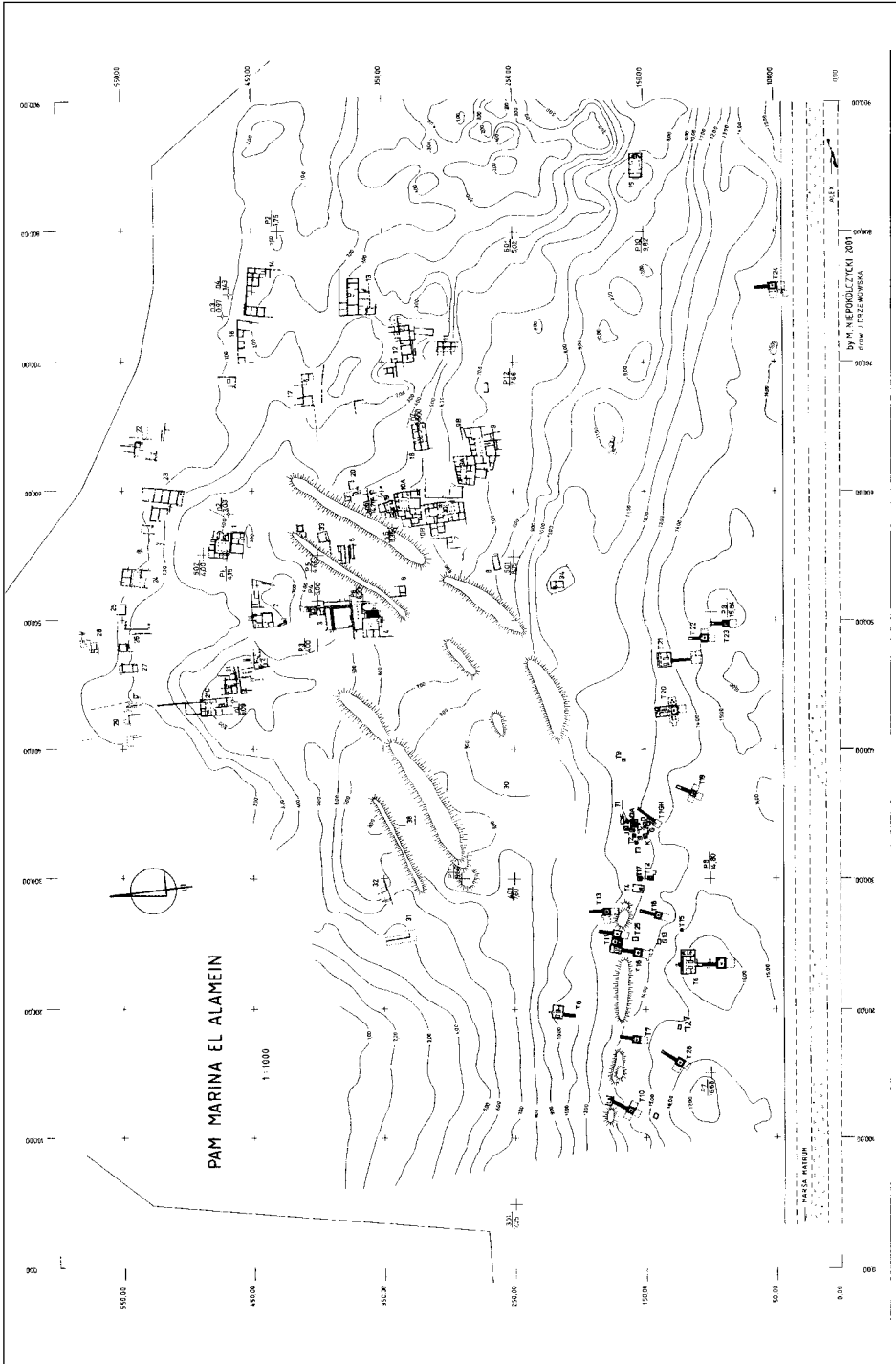


Fig. 1. Marina el-Alamein. Plan of the site, newly mapped in 2001
(Drawing M. Niepokólczycki)

TOMB 27

The tomb in question, rectangular in plan (L. 2.65 m; W. 2.00 m), partly damaged in the past, is located between hypogea T 28 on the west and T 6 on the east. The northern of the two loculi of this box-like tomb was explored, the southern one having been investigated in the previous season, immediately after the discovery of the structure.²⁾

The northern loculus, 2.30 m long and 0.60 m wide, was found to contain four consecutive burials. Some 30 cm below the top of the sand fill there lay the skeleton of a woman 40-45 years old, her head facing west. A few centimeters below, in the front part of the loculus, two burials, one of an

adolescent, 16-18 years old, and the other of a child, two years old, had been packed in forcibly, displacing other bones in the process. Some 40 cm below this there was yet another female skeleton (of a 30-40 year old person), this time accompanied by grave goods in the form of a small glass bottle and an unguentarium of clay. The last or rather the earliest burial in the loculus was that of a woman, 25-30 years old, again provided with a small glass bottle. All the grave goods point to a 1st century AD, confirming the dating of the tomb suggested in last season's report. It is clear, however, that the tomb was used over a longer period.

TOMB 28

The tomb had been located and partly investigated in the course of the previous season.³⁾ It is approximately 25 m long and belongs to the type of hypogeum that has a staircase, open-air court and funerary chambers, but no aboveground mausoleum. The staircase originally terminated on ground level with a rectangular entrance kiosk. Only the upper part of the open-air court and the staircase had been cleared of sand during the past campaign. The southern funerary chamber, located on the longitudinal axis of the tomb, had been opened and partly explored. Presently, all the human remains in the chamber were examined by an anthropologist.⁴⁾ The burials in the loculi turned out to be of a primary nature. Even so, many other

corpses had been thrown in pell-mell upon the sand filling of the chamber, testifying to protracted activity by plunderers. The corpses in the loculi had been mummified following the simplified embalming procedure that was characteristic of the period. The corpses were wrapped in resinated cloth (bandages). While the state of preservation of the mummified corpses varied, the saline and humid conditions in the tomb had done considerable damage to the bones despite the efforts at mummification. Indeed, anthropological measurements of the bones were in many cases extremely difficult and sometimes altogether impossible. Some forty corpses were clearly identified and examined, but these constituted merely a part of the total

2) W. A. Daszewski, *PAM XII, Reports 2000* (2001), 51-53, Fig. 5.

3) *Ibid.*, 56-58.

4) Prof. Maria Kaczmarek of Poznań University is preparing a final publication of these and other burials in the necropolis of Marina, which she has been examining over the past few years.

number of the deceased buried in the chamber. The sex ratio appears to be 1:1; however, the structure of the occupants of the tomb by sex and age is far from the theoretical expectations for the population, especially with respect to the number of children, which is far too low. This is probably partly due to bone decay. The mean age at death of the men falls within the 30-39 age category, that of the women 30-34 years. Evidence of degenerative diseases is prolific.

In the course of further cleaning of the open air court the entrance to yet another funerary chamber was found on the west side. This chamber (N-S: 4.90 m; E-W: 4.20 m; c. 3.80 m high) was filled in with sand almost to the top in front, while at the rear a mass of big, irregular limestone

blocks was scattered all over the floor to a considerable height, partly covering the rear wall. Two mummified corpses, of a man and of a woman lay on the sand next to the blocks. These were the last burials, made apparently when the chamber had already been partly filled with sand. The corpses were accompanied by a small bowl, probably local imitation of the *pareti sottili* type, and a fragment of ribbed amphoriscos.

Examination of the rear wall revealed a section that had been walled in with three rows of rectangular limestone slabs (0.60 x 0.30 x 0.10 m) bonded and masked with lime plaster. Once the blocks were removed, a big undisturbed loculus appeared behind the concealing wall (Fig. 2). It was 3.30 m wide at the front, 2.80 m at



Fig. 2. Tomb 28. Undisturbed burials in a concealed loculus in the western chamber (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

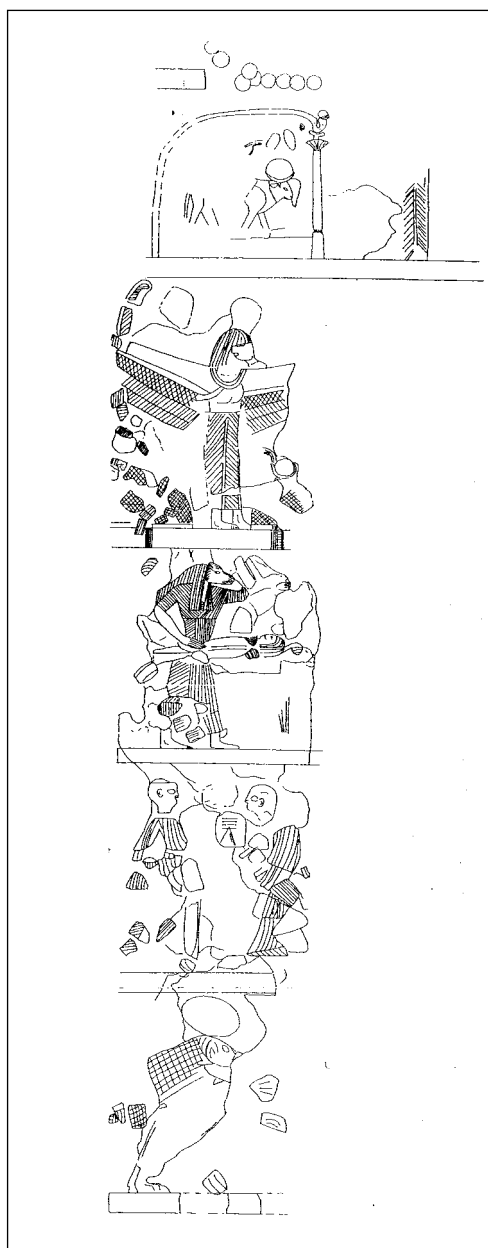


Fig. 3. Tomb 28. Decoration on a cartonnage belonging to the mummy of an adolescent (Drawing I. Zych)

the back; 1.78- 2.00 m deep and 1 m high. There were ten corpses deposited inside it, lying side by side, their heads all to the west. Six corpses belonged to men (one adolescent of 16 years, one man of 22-26, one of 27-30, two of 35-39, one of 45-50), two were women of 25-30 years, one an infant of three and another a child of ten. Three of the corpses had been thoroughly mummified and provided with cartonnages of lime plaster, now almost completely disintegrated owing to the humid conditions inside the tomb. Coarse linen was used to wrap each body, and then the wrappings were stuccoed on the front, painted with a reddish undercoating and gilded.

In spite of the poor preservation of the mummies, it was possible to discern on the cartonnage covering the mummy of the adolescent traces of impressed and gilded decoration upon a reddish undercoating. The decoration was divided into horizontal registers (Fig. 3). Each contained a mythological scene.⁵⁾ The middle register, one of the better preserved, represents the jackal-headed Anubis, who stands facing left, behind a bier, lustrating the wrapped mummy of the deceased lying on the bier. He wears a striated long wig (probably topped by a disc, now destroyed). His left hand is raised (holding a vessel presumably), his right hand rests on the body of the mummy. Anubis wears a short-sleeved ankle-length sheath and may have had a broad collar necklace. The register above shows a figure, which should probably be identified as the Sky Goddess Nut, who protects the dead on their way into the Netherworld. She is standing facing left with outstretched wings holding in her hand a *maat*-feather, wearing a wig, a broad

5) For the type of decoration, especially upon stucco mummies, cf. L.H. Corcoran, *Portrait Mummies from Roman Egypt* (Chicago 1995), 162 ff.

collar and a long dress.⁶⁾ The top register shows the Apis Bull in a kiosk crowned with a cobra frieze. The two lowermost registers are so badly damaged that the correct deciphering of the scenes is very difficult, if not entirely impossible. At the very bottom, however, one can recognize the rear part of a seated animal. It might perhaps be the demon (*"Totenfresserin"*), usually represented with a crocodile's snout, who waits to devour the heart of the deceased, should it be judged unfit for the afterlife.⁷⁾ The register above shows two male figures facing each other, with an object in between them. Perhaps we are dealing here with a representation of the adoration of a fetish of Osiris, a scene

depicted on several other stuccoed mummies.⁸⁾

The remaining six corpses had been buried wrapped in resinated cloth (shrouds). No grave goods accompanied the burials, the one exception being a small golden leaf (0.015 cm thick) found between the teeth of the adolescent.⁹⁾

It is noteworthy that in the same hypogeum, in the same funerary chamber and sometimes in the same loculus, there were considerable differences as to the way the deceased were buried. It appears that the form of burial might have varied according to the status of the deceased, his age and the wealth of his family. Burials of small children were usually very simple.

GRAVE G 13

A "prism grave", identified in 1999 by means of geophysical prospection and eventually unearthed in the last season but left unexplored, has now been investigated.¹⁰⁾ The actual grave was located under a prism (0.35-0.40 m high) composed of sand and small stones retained in place by a poor enclosure wall of limestone slabs set upright. The grave turned out to be a trench hewn into bedrock, 2.05 m long,

0.70-0.50 m wide and 0.50-0.55 m deep (*Fig. 4*). Covering the trench was a gable roof of oblong blocks of limestone joined on top by means of a row of narrow, oblong blocks – like a spine – set horizontally and bonded with clay mortar mixed with lime particles.¹¹⁾ Buried in the grave was a woman aged 25-30, her head pointing west. There were no grave goods. After examination, the tomb was backfilled with sand.

6) Prof. Erich Winter, to whom I am grateful for this remark, is of the opinion that: *"Die Maat-Federn in den Händen lassen vermuten, dass hier eine ikonografische Aussage aus den Darstellungen vom Totengericht mit eingeflossen ist: Der sogenannte 'Gestus der Rechtfertigung', bei dem der Tote als Reaktion auf die Rechtfertigung durch die Totenrichter beide Arme im Jubel-Gestus emporhält und in diesen seinen Händen Maat-Federn hält oder schwingt"*. Cf. also Ch. Seeber, "Untersuchungen zur Darstellung des Totengerichts im Alten Ägypten", *MÄS* 35 (München-Berlin 1976), 98 ff., fig. 34. For similar representations, see also: W. Flinders Petrie, *Roman Portraits and Memphis (IV)* (London 1911), pl. XXI, mummies from Hawara.

7) Seeber, *Untersuchungen*, op. cit., 163 ff.

8) Corcoran, op. cit., pl. 18, and 164 ff., 174.

9) The same kind of leaf had been found between the teeth of a young man in Tomb 6, cf. W.A. Daszewski, "Mummy Portraits from Northern Egypt", in: *Portraits and Masks. Burial Customs in Roman Egypt* (ed. M.L. Bierbrier) (London 1997), 59 ff., and pl. 6,3-4.

10) Daszewski, *PAM XII*, op. cit., 51.

11) All other "prism graves" found in Marina to date had flat roofing of the trench.

TOMB 21

Cleaning of the floor in the banquet room of the aboveground pavilion belonging to a hypogeum tomb¹²⁾ revealed three mosaic *emblemata*, two upon round terracotta trays (Dia. 0.31 and 0.37 m., respectively), one upon a nearly square tray (0.48 x 0.45 m), inserted into a floor made of limestone

slabs (Fig. 5). The mosaic was almost completely gone except for a few fragments, probably of a bird (?), preserved upon the square emblem.¹³⁾ The tesserae (1-4 mm) were of different color stones, glass and faience. The mosaic dates from the late 1st or early 2nd century AD.

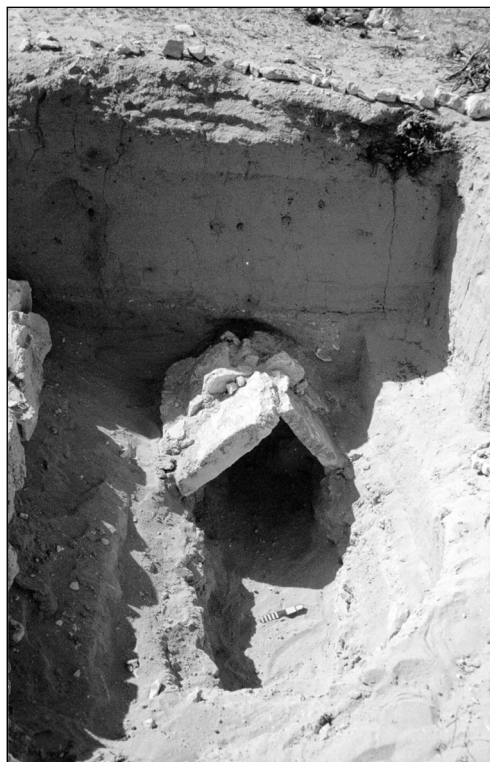


Fig. 4. Grave G 13 in the course of exploration
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)



Fig. 5. Tomb 21. Three mosaic *emblemata* in the banquet hall of the tomb mausoleum (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

12) Only a small part of this tomb had been unearthed in the course of salvage works carried out by Egyptian authorities some years ago. I would like to express my thanks to Mr. Abdel Latif el Wakil, Director of the site, for turning my attention to this hypogeum, which we shall investigate in detail in the coming seasons.

13) This discovery appears to be the first material corroboration for the interpretation of an inscription of the 1st century AD, found in a heroon in Apateira in the territory of Ephesos, mentioning among other Egyptian items also, "[.....]a *Alexandreina psephota dekaennea*" decorating the heroon. The missing word, of which only the last "a" is preserved, has usually been interpreted as "*emblemata*". For the discussion, cf. W.A. Daszewski, *Corpus of Mosaics from Egypt*, I (Mainz 1985), 15ff.

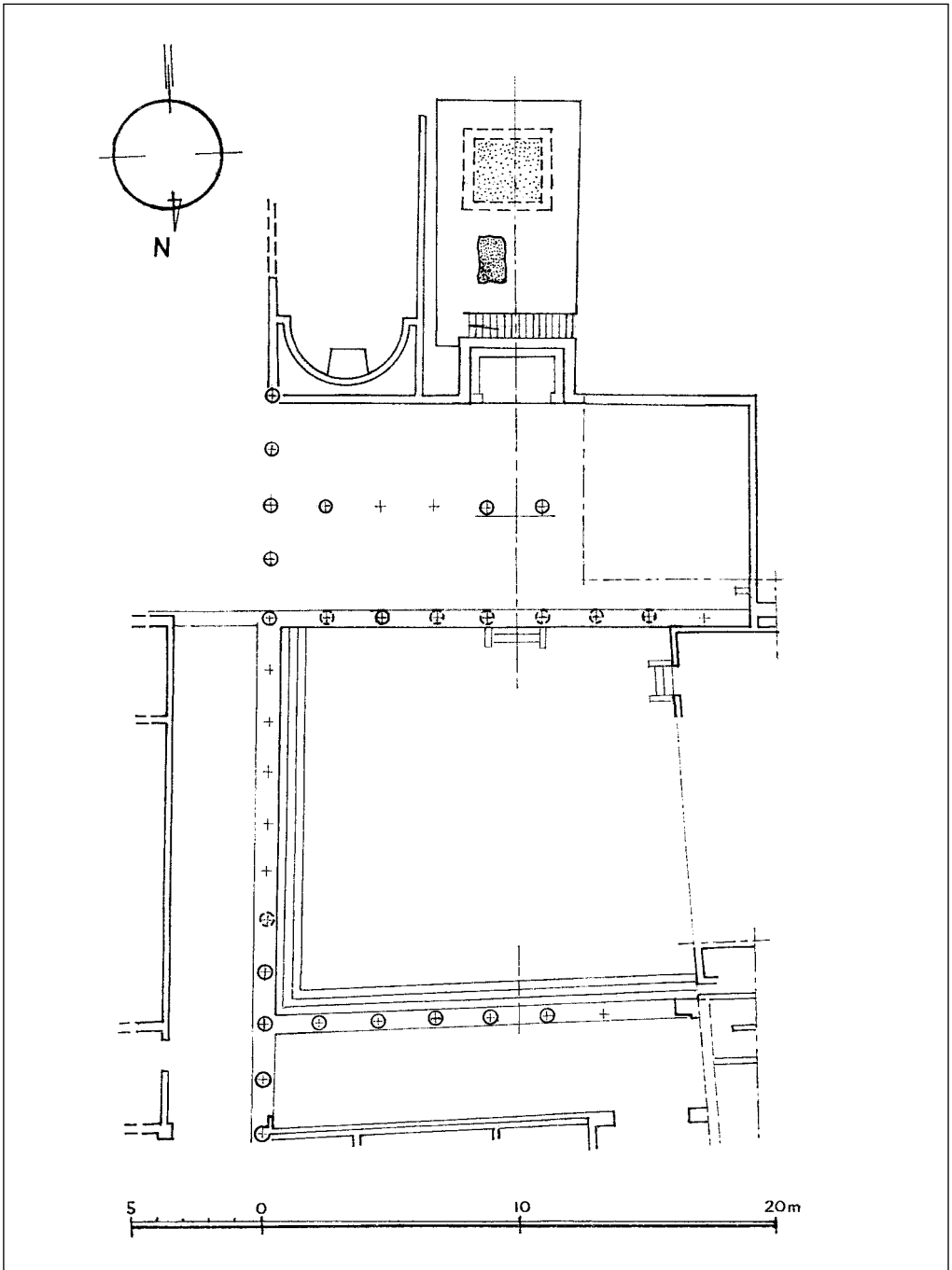


Fig. 6. Town Center. Square with colonnaded porticoes
(Drawing W. Kolqataj)

TOWN CENTER

Excavations concentrated on the western side of a mound of debris accumulated during the leveling works undertaken for the construction of the modern tourist town of Marina. In this area, a pavement of flagstones had been identified in the course of the past season.¹⁴ It was located at the hypothetical crossing of a street (?) – a section of which had previously been uncovered east of the mound of the debris – and the line of the inner wall of a kind of peristyle, fragmentarily unearthed in the course of salvage excavations carried out in 1987 south of the tholos bath (cf. *Fig. 1*, no. 3 on the plan).

This season, a large square surrounded with colonnaded porticoes on the north, east and south side was uncovered (*Fig. 6*). The square and the porticoes were paved all over with flagstones (0.36; 0.40; 0.46; 0.61; and even 0.71 m long; 0.31; 0.39; 0.40 m wide), set regularly in rows running either E-W or N-S (*Fig. 8*). The square is slightly irregular, trapezoidal in plan (15 m N-S on the east; 14.44 m N-S on the west; 16.40 m E-W on the north; and 15.20 m E-W on the south). The north and east sides of the square had three steps leading up to the stylobate. On the south, emphasizing the central axis, was a set of three steps with side walls (2.33 m wide, including side-walls, each wall 0.26 m wide). The steps were 0.27 m wide and 0.11, 0.19 and 0.21 m high, respectively. All the columns bordering the square were Ionic. The intercolumnar space varied in width from 1.40 to 1.60 m, narrower on the east and wider on the north and south sides. The north portico is 3.60 m wide (*Fig. 9*), the eastern one 3.20 m. The south

portico appears to have been two rows of columns deep. Its total width was 7.90 m, the space between the outer and the inner line of columns and between the inner row of columns and the rear wall being the same 3.60 m in width.

Originally, all the columns and the capitals had been plastered and painted. Minute traces of paint survive upon the volutes of the capitals. The plaster still adhering to some stone column drums preserves convex fluting (*Fig. 7*) with



Fig. 7. Town Center. Drum of Ionic column with remains of a fluted plaster coating (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

14) Daszewski, *PAM XII*, op. cit., 58-61.



Fig. 8. Town Center. Square with colonnaded porticoes, view from the northeast
(Photo W. Jerke)

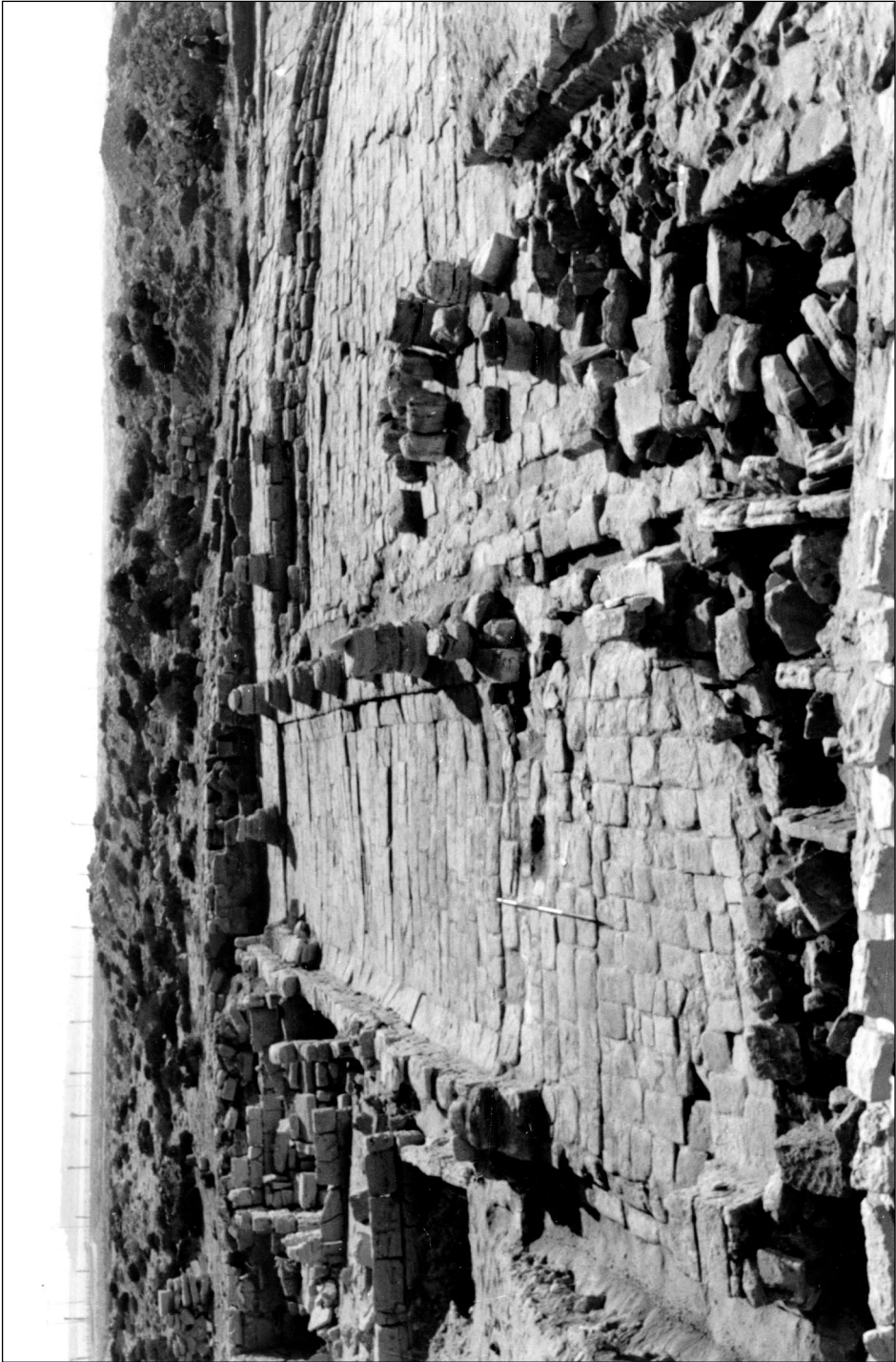


Fig. 9. Town Center. North portico with adjacent structures, view from the west
(Photo W. Jerke)

narrow flat listels separating the flutes.¹⁵ Many fragments of painted plaster imitating ashlar masonry separated by means of incised red lines¹⁶ were found all along the rear wall of the south portico.

In the middle of the rear wall, right on the axis of the steps leading from the square to the south portico, there opened a large rectangular exedra (2.91 m E-W; 2.20 m N-S) set on a slightly higher level with regard to the portico floor and emphasized by means of a shallow threshold (*Fig. 10*). On three sides – east, south and west – it was provided with benches, 0.30 m wide and 0.34 m high, made of limestone slabs, 0.09 m thick, mounted on stone supports set at regular intervals and revealing traces of molded decoration on the front face. The floor was paved with flagstones of a similar kind as those used in the paving of the peristyle and the square. The rear and side walls of the exedra were plastered and painted. Shallow pilasters are discernible in the corners and in the middle of the rear wall (0.14 m in the corners; 0.18 m in the middle); they were modeled in plaster, bordering large rectangular panels. The panels are 1.06 m wide in the back and 1.64 m on the lateral walls of the exedra. Immediately above the bench and below the panels, all around the room, there runs a plain band that must have been painted with the same color (probably Pompeian red) as the pilasters. The debris of blocks accumulated inside the exedra yielded a number of voussoirs, which when put together formed an arch, about 1.60 m wide at the base. It may have rested on elements decorated with pilasters

projecting inward (0.34 m) from the side walls of the exedra.

Fragments of benches (0.35 m wide; 0.38 high) were also discovered along the rear wall of the south portico, on both sides of the exedra. Yet another fragmentary bench was uncovered near the western end of the south portico. A complete bench was also found in the north portico, near its northeastern corner (*cf. Fig. 9*). This particular bench was 3.65 m long and had four "legs" (molded slabs), 0.34 m high, supporting several flat slabs (0.15 m thick and 0.40 m wide), decorated with molding on the front side.

Inside the exedra, just upon the floor, and in the easternmost part of the south portico (the only section that was excavated completely), exploration revealed a layer of ashes several centimeters thick, testifying to a major fire that could have been the cause of the building's destruction. Covering this layer was a 10-15 cm thick layer of sand and plaster particles, upon which reposed the fallen blocks of the walls and the drums of columns, thus indicating the sequence of destruction.

To the south of the above-described structure a basilical building (*Cf. Fig. 1*, no. 4 on the plan; and *Fig. 6*), probably of later date, is to be found. This structure had made use in part of the rear wall of the south portico, including a column of the east portico (*cf. Fig. 6*). A big apse abuts the wall on its southern side.

The function of the complex, that is, the square and porticoes, is not clear yet. Regular paving extending eastward beyond the east portico, as well as walls

15) The same type of convex fluting with flat listels was found at Kom el-Dikka in an early Roman (Late Hellenistic ?) house. Personal communication from Dr. G. Majcherek, responsible for the Polish excavations there.

16) The decoration recalls the First Pompeian Style.



*Fig. 10. Town Center. Exedra in the south portico of the square, view from the north
(Photo W. Jerke)*

surviving in the lowermost courses, indicate the presence of some rooms there. The building extending to the north of the north portico comprises several small rooms and a tholos bath; the orientation of this building, however, differs from that of the portico and of the square, being slightly at an angle with respect to the portico. It is also quite likely of earlier date. The west side of the square does not appear to have had a colonnaded portico. Some small structures were uncovered instead: a staircase to the north of the north portico; a big paved room to the southwest of the square, provided with steps leading down onto the pavement of the square. For the moment, it cannot be excluded that the square with porticoes had been added to a pre-existing bath as a kind of palaestra.

Finally, it should be noted that the street (?) uncovered during the previous season to the east of the mound of debris abuts either the south end of the east

portico or the eastern end of the south portico. The latter terminates here not in a wall, but in a row of five (!) columns (cf. *Fig. 5*). Further excavation is needed to elucidate this question and to understand the function of the building, as well as its relation to the basilical structure on the south.

A few bronze coins found between the flagstones of the square and the porticoes range in date from the final years of the reign of Augustus until the time of Hadrian.¹⁷⁾ It is very likely that the square and its porticoes date to the first half of the 1st century AD. It was used over a long time, certainly well into the 3rd century, as indicated by pottery sherds and fragments of terracotta oil lamps. Also found stuck between the flagstones of the pavement was a very fine ring stone of red glass paste, engraved with a representation of a young satyr playfully feeding a bunch of grapes to a small goat.¹⁸⁾

MAPPING THE SITE

An important part of our work this season was devoted to the mapping of the site of the ancient settlement, including the residential quarters and the necropolises.

The position of all the buildings and tombs was checked and rechecked, and a revised complete plan of the site was traced (cf. *Fig. 1*).

17) I am indebted to Prof. Barbara Lichocka for a provisional identification of the coins. They were attributed to Livia, Claudius, Galba(?), Domitian(?), Trajan or Hadrian, Hadrian.

18) For a similar motif but of poorer execution, found upon a gem of the 2nd century AD, of red jasper, now in Munich, cf. E. Brandt, in: *Antike Gemmen in Deutschen Sammlungen I. München* (Munich 1972), 74, No. 2570.