

KOM EL-DIKKA

PRESERVATION WORK, 1997/98

Wojciech Kołątaj

In keeping with Variant I presented in the work program for the 1997/1998 season, the Mission was financed jointly by the Egyptian and Polish sides in compliance with a decision of the SCA Permanent Committee.¹ All the required payments and supplies of building materials proceeded without serious hindrance.

¹ The Mission staff included: Dr. Wojciech Kołątaj, eng. architect, director; Dr. Grzegorz Majcherek, archaeologist; Mr. Wiesław Kuczewski, eng. conservator; Mr. Stanisław Górniak, eng. conservator. The Egyptian side was represented by Mr. Ahmed Moussa, SCA site inspector.

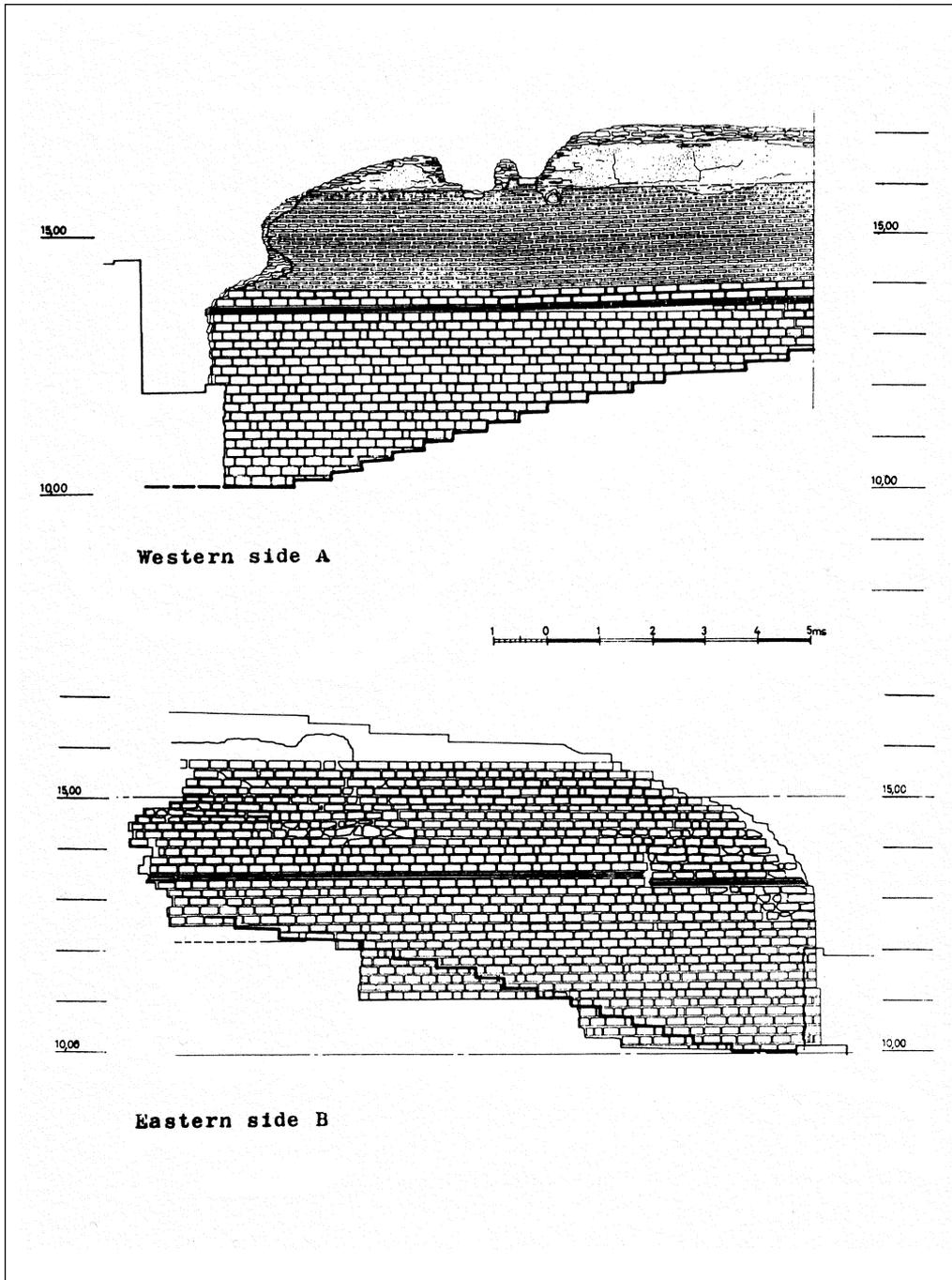


Fig. 1. Cisterns. Restored walls of the corridor
(Drawing W. Kołtąj)

It should be noted that on the initiative of the Governor of Alexandria, Mr. Mohammed Abdel Salam Mahgoub, the immediate surroundings of the site have been arranged, the work being financed from municipal funds. The square and parking place on Safia Zaghloul Street and the square in front of the Main Railway Station (beside the tourist entrance to the Roman Theater site) were given a redesigned communication system, new pavements, new green architecture. A striking new fence along Safia Zaghloul Street and a monument to Khedive Ismail installed there have greatly enhanced the view of the archaeological site, increasing popular interest in the ancient ruins. Hence, it has become even more important for the Mission to increase its efforts to complete the remaining conservation

in order to open the entire site to the public.

All through the season work continued on removing the soil deposits in the Theater Portico – close to 8,000 m³ this season – enabling the team to undertake the restoration of the Portico in coming seasons.

In view of the above mentioned activities and the approval by the American Research Center in Egypt of a conservation project to protect some Early Roman mosaics in the residential quarter east of ancient street R4, directly adjacent to Safia Zaghloul Street, and to build a shelter over them (Egyptian Antiquities Project USAID Grant No. 260-000-G-00-3089-00), it proved necessary to modify the conservation work program presented in Variant I.



Fig. 2. Cisterns. Western wall of the corridor before restoration (Photo W. Kołtąj)



Fig. 3. Cisterns. Western wall of the corridor after restoration (Photo W. Kołtąj)

CISTERNS

Top priority was accorded the work in the area of the cisterns lying immediately adjacent to the access route to the projected mosaics pavilion. The western wall of the corridor-ramp, 26 m² (Figs 1, 2, 3), as well as the south drawing wells (Figs 4, 5) were protected and restored where necessary. The restoration of the crown of the wall separating the Cisterns from street R4 was completed and a staircase was constructed

along its southern edges. The consolidation of the cavities under the Cisterns was completed (Fig. 6) and a fragment of the wall fallen from the northern facade of the structure was put back in place (Figs 1, 8, 9).

The preserved lower parts of the north wall of the Cisterns were cleared to prepare the ground for completing the conservation of the structure in the coming season.

OTHER WORKS

The buttresses of the south outer wall of the Baths were not rebuilt in full as a new entrance to the underground cellars had been revealed in recent excavations, along with the northeastern corner of the south gymnasium and a column belonging to it. The corner of the gymnasium was restored and a column has been prepared for raising in the coming season; preparations in-

cluded raising the tripod, connecting the parts of the broken column etc. In connection with the clearing of the entire length of the south passage of the Baths and the execution of the southern tourist path, a previously protected and restored column was raised in the peristyle of the bath latrine. A capital was mounted on top of this column (Fig. 10:L).

The tourist walkway along the southern limits of the site, from the Theater to street R4 and the mosaics shelter (120 m), was completed, including pavement, steps, casing walls and sloping work (Fig. 11).



Fig. 4. Cisterns. South double wall before restoration (Photo W. Kołtątaj)



Fig. 5. Cisterns. South double wall after restoration (Photo W. Kołtątaj)

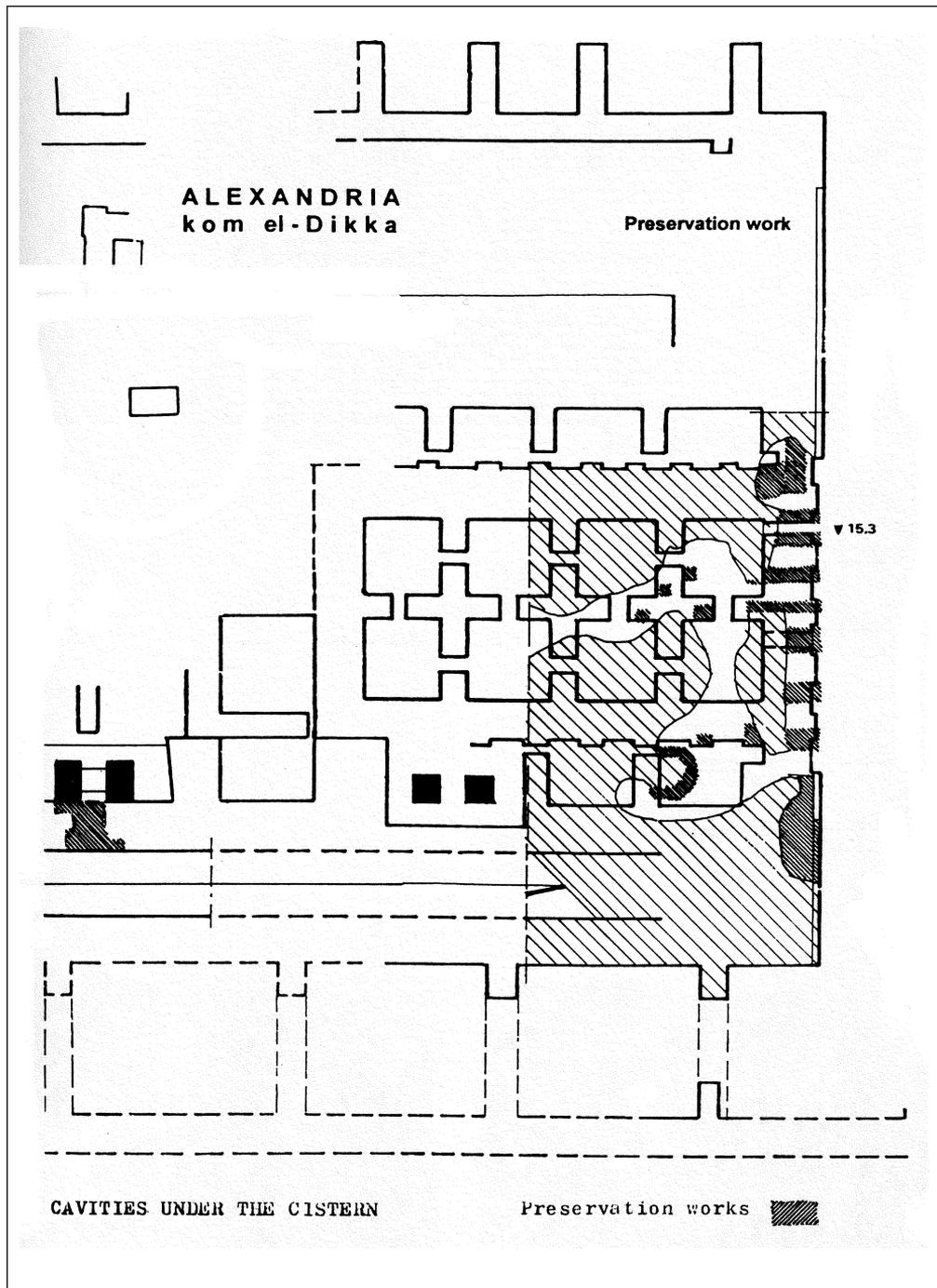


Fig. 6. Cisterns. Protection of the substructure
(Drawing W. Kołtąj)

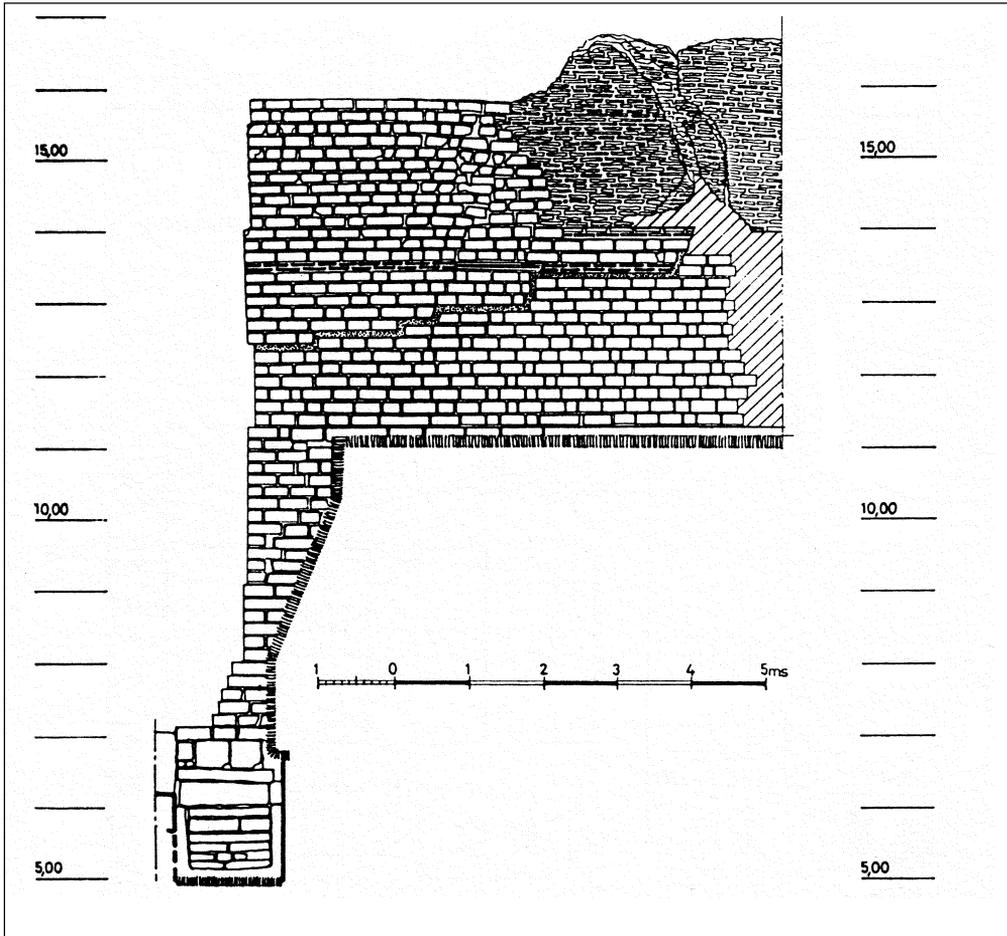


Fig. 7. Cisterns. Restored corner of the northern facade
(Drawing W. Kolqataj)



Fig. 8. Cisterns. Northeastern corner before restoration
(Photo W. Kolqataj)



Fig. 9. Cisterns. Northeastern corner after restoration
(Photo W. Kolqataj)

Currently, a water supply pipe is being installed along this walkway, enabling extension of the green area along the southern border of the site. The steps leading down from the gate in Safia Zaghloul Street to the south

portico passage of the Baths have been designed. The plundered foundations and floors of the frigidarium on this side were cleared, preparing ground for work in the future season (Figs 10:B; 12).

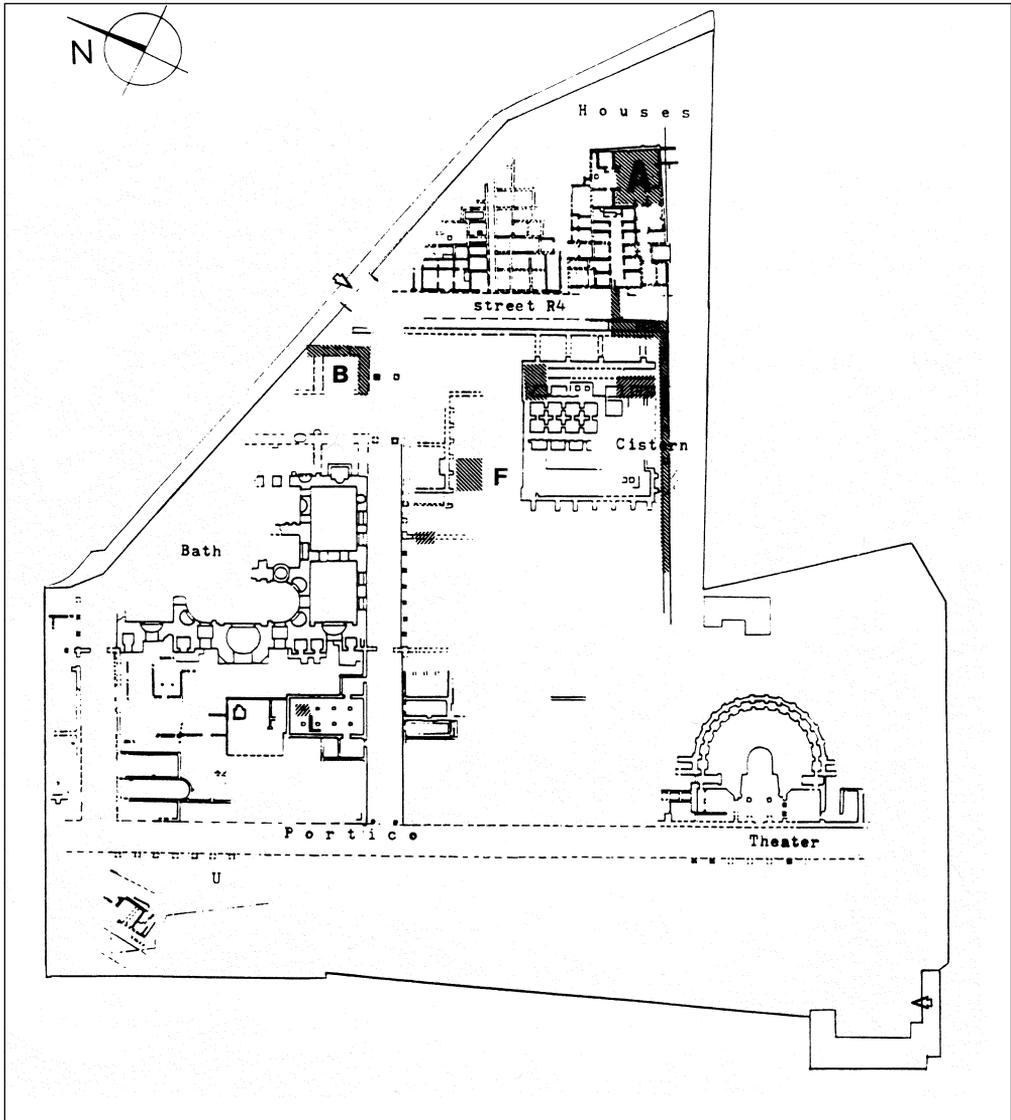


Fig. 10. General plan of the site with areas of preservation work in 1997-1998
(Drawing W. Kołtąj)

In the area of the projected mosaics pavilion, some 300 m³ of earth covering the Early Roman mosaic floors were removed, as well as some sections of Late Byzantine walls, which had to be dismantled to facilitate viewing of the ancient remains underneath.

Architectural and construction designs have been prepared of the shelter to be erected above the mosaic floors.

Work on the conservation of the mosaic floors has begun and is planned to proceed all through the summer months (Fig. 10: A).

In the area of current archaeological excavations in the Roman villas (sector F), essential protection work was undertaken wherever required.

This season there was no work in the area of the Theater.

CONSERVATION METHODS

The present report does not provide details of the conservation methods applied. Over the years, the work in this field has been discussed repeatedly, both in terms of the conservation measures and the legal resolutions adopted by in-

ternational circles. A comprehensive review of the conservation work from 1966 until 1999, as well as descriptions of Specific important activities will be presented in the final report which is currently under preparation.



Fig. 11. Tourist path along the southern limits of the site (Photo W. Kolqataj)

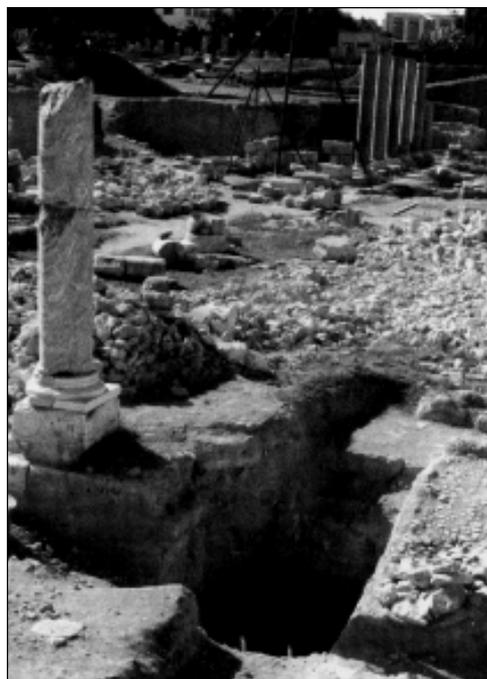


Fig. 12. Baths. Southeastern corner of the frigidarium after cleaning (Photo W. Kolqataj)