

MARINA EL-ALAMEIN

EXCAVATION REPORT 2004

Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski

in collaboration with

Iwona Zych, Grażyna Bąkowska, Artur Błaszczyk

The present campaign carried out under the auspices of the Polish Centre of Archaeology of Warsaw University lasted from March 1 until April 3, 2004.¹

The excavations, which started with the fortuitous discovery of a sculpture that led in effect to the clearing of a new box tomb (T 30), covered both the necropolis and the town area. In the necropolis, work concentrated on the excavation and documentation of a large tomb (T 21), of which only a small part of the aboveground mausoleum had been uncovered years ago during salvage work by Egyptian inspectors. The presence of three mosaic emblemata decorating the center of the floor in the banquet hall, noted in the report on fieldwork in 2001,² prompted the decision to study the complex more thoroughly. As regards the newly discovered tomb (T 30), its architecture was explored, leaving the examination of the anthropological material for the coming season.

The other focus of the work this year was the clearing of the entire south portico of the main Town Square. This was accomplished and a further section of the tumbled wall overlying a street running south from the southeastern corner of the square was cleared. Here, too, the work will be continued in the future.

1 The team directed by Prof. Dr. Wiktor A. Daszewski, comprised: Mrs. Iwona Zych, Ms Grażyna Bąkowska, Mr. Andrzej Retkowski, archaeologists; Mr. Artur Błaszczyk, Ms Małgorzata Krawczyk, architects. Dr. Grzegorz Majcherek studied the pottery, and Ms Joanna Lis, conservator, joined the team for two days to restore the limestone statue found in Tomb 30. The SCA was represented by Site Inspector Mme Nama Sanad Yakoub.

The Mission would like to express its gratitude to the SCA authorities, the Secretary General Dr. Zahi Hawass in particular. Mr. Mahmud Yasin, Director of the Marina archaeological site, was instrumental for the progress of our work. The Mission is also grateful to Mr. Abd el Latif el Wakil for his unfailing and competent assistance on a number of occasions.

2 Cf. PAM XIII, *Reports 2001* (2002), 79 and Fig. 5.

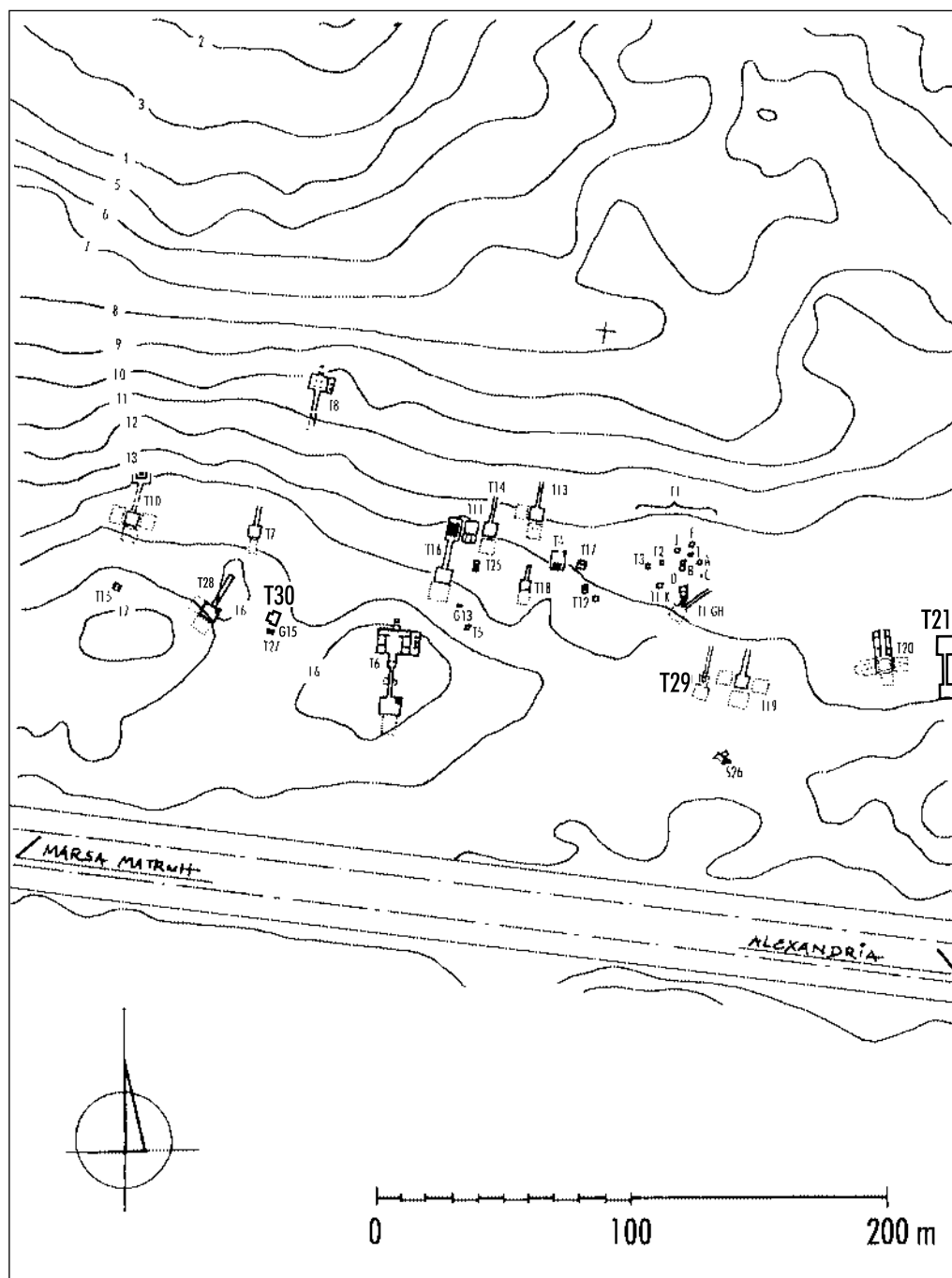


Fig. 1. Plan of the cemetery in Marina el-Alamein, state after the 2004 season

BOX TOMB T 30

A tomb of the box type comprising five loculi, dated to the 1st/2nd century AD, was discovered in the northwestern part of the necropolis, 3.02 m north of box Tomb 27 and 22.80 m southeast of Hypogeum-Tomb 7 [Fig. 1].³ The main structure, which faces east, was rectangular in plan and consisted of three loculi oriented E-W. An extension of two additional loculi, also oriented E-W, was added onto its northern side. One more loculus tomb, oriented N-S, was built onto the back of the main structure, the entrance to it facing north.

The main tomb was 2.95-3.03 m long (E-W) with a façade that measured 2.98 m (N-S). The walls of the tomb rose to a height of c. 0.70 m; the slabs covering the loculi had an average thickness of 0.25 m. At the highest preserved point, at the west end, the total height of the tomb was 1.04 m [Figs. 2,3]. The space inside the structure was divided with two stone partition walls, forming loculi from 0.54 to 0.70 m wide, and all 0.70 m high inside; the opening of the central one was effectively decreased to just 0.40 m by a block built into the entrance on ground level. The southern and northern loculi of the main part had the closing slabs in place. The two northernmost loculi that were found closed had an additional set of stones and slabs leaning against the blocked openings; they were set in sand some 15-30 cm above the original ground level, additionally blocking the openings to the burial niches [Fig. 4].

Once the northern extension with two loculi was added, the total length of the tomb façade reached 4.66 m. The two loculi were 2.80 m long (N-S). The covering slabs, an average 0.13-0.14 cm thick, made use

of a ledge left for this purpose on the wall of the main part of the tomb. The southern loculus of the two was 0.70 m wide, the northern one 0.69 m; both were 0.70 m high. A low step, 0.12 m wide and about 0.10 m deep, was introduced in front of the entire extension, presumably to compensate for the difference in bedrock level. The ground in front of the two northern loculi was leveled even with the top of this step with crushed lime debris and sand mixed together. Both openings were also blocked secondarily with slabs and stones in the same manner as the loculi of the main part of the tomb.

On top of the slabs covering the northernmost loculus, there was a row of upright slabs, 0.26 m high and 0.15 m thick, lining the northern and western edges. The total height of the tomb with the enclosure slabs at the west end was 1.09 m. Inside the enclosure, a skeleton burial of a juvenile was discovered directly on top of the covering slabs of the loculus. The skull was missing, but otherwise the bones were found in anatomical order, the body laid out in supine position with left hand on the pelvic area and right one extended away from the body.

The western extension, added on to the main part of the tomb and making use of a ledge left on the back wall of the tomb to support the closing slabs, was of the same length as the width of the main tomb, that is c. 3.00 m; its width ranged from c. 1.03 m at the northern end and c. 0.95 m at the southern one. The height of the loculus was 0.66 m [Fig. 5]. (The difference in the width was due to the west wall of this tomb being doubled, the space in between

3 Cf. PAM IV, *Reports* 1992 (1993), 29; PAM V, *Reports* 1993 (1994), 29-31.

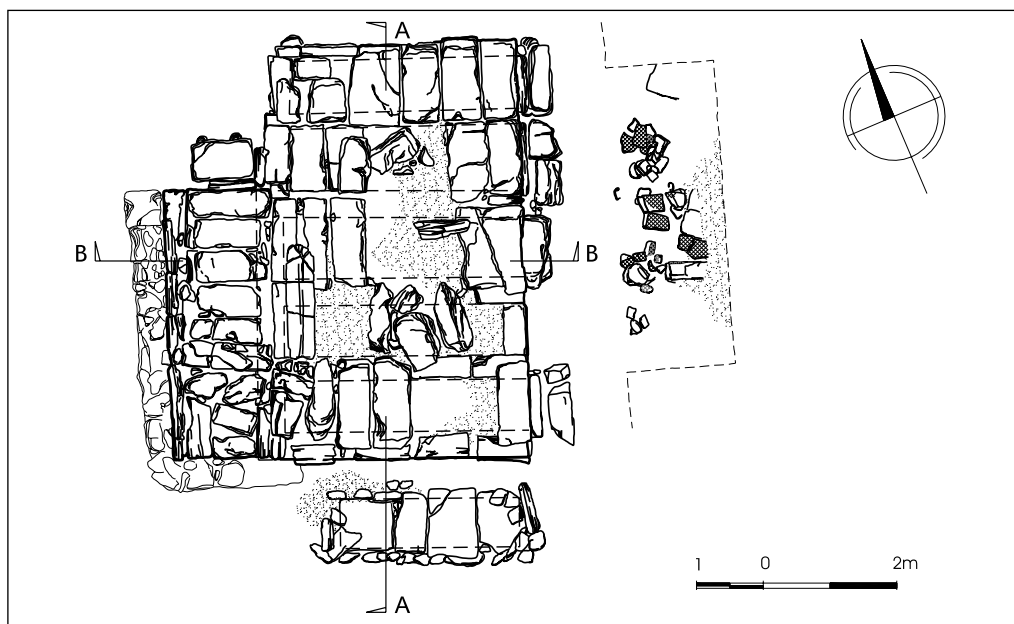


Fig. 2. Plan of Tomb 30
(Drawing A. Błaszczyk)



Fig. 3. General view of the main part of Tomb 30 from the northeast. The limestone funerary statue stands in the presumed position of the naos (Photo I. Zych)

the rows of stones being packed with small stones and rubble; the outer façade comprised an even row of slabs.) The top of this tomb was evened out with a compact layer of sand mixed with chips of limestone, concealing from view the covering slabs and outer wall structure. In the course of time, a 'bench', made of irregular stones and broken slabs, was added all along the western and southern walls of the extension, c. 0.09 m above the original ground level in this part. Its width was an average 0.35 m, the height being 0.27-0.30 m above bedrock.

A layer including limestone 'altars' with traces of burning and broken pottery, as well as some lamps and glass fragments, was in evidence all around the tomb, starting at bedrock level and rising to an



Fig. 4. East façade with closing slabs in place (Photo I. Zych)



Fig. 5. The western extension to Tomb 30 with surrounding 'bench', view from the south (Photo I. Zych)

average of 0.20 m in the immediate vicinity of the walls of the tomb. Two early lamps (first half of 1st century AD) and a small glass bottle plus a fragment of early 1st-century glass pillar-moulded bowl were discovered immediately in front of the loculus in the western extension. In front of the eastern façade, the earliest layer of 'altar-stones' and broken pottery, mainly bottom parts of wine amphorae produced in the Mareotic region (AE3), extended all along the front of the tomb. The rubble contained also some fragments of imported vessels originating from Cilicia and/or Cyprus ("pinched amphorae") and Crete. Several sherds of omnipresent Cypriot Sigillata (Hayes form 40) were also recorded. A second level of 'altars' appeared

at a distance of c. 1.18 m east of the façade, more or less opposite the northernmost loculus of the main part of the tomb and the first loculus in the northern extension, about 0.33 m above the bedrock in this part. Two concentrations of burnt stones were located, arranged between upright slabs. The northern one measured approximately 0.30 by 0.40 m and was ringed with unburned limestone rocks, the southern one covered an area about 0.70 by 0.50 m. A fragment of oil lamp with rosette pattern on the discus was found with the northern 'altar'. A third set of 'altar' stones, 0.50 by 0.40 m, joined the second one just in front of the upright slab. The latest level of 'altar' stones rested next to the upright slab; traces of burning can



Fig. 6. *The discovery of the statue among blocks from the presumed naos superstructure of Tomb 30 (Photo I. Zych)*

be seen on its northern face. This level was about 0.45-0.50 m above bedrock and lay about 1.80 m east of the northern loculus of the main tomb.

A concentration of broken amphorae lay alongside the southern part of the bench attached to the tomb in the western extension and partly on top of it. The assemblage comprised mostly vessels that could be assigned to the 1st-2nd century AD. The bulk consisted of containers produced in the northwest coastal region and Mareotis. Several fragments of Cretan amphorae and pseudo-Koan containers manufactured in Cilicia were also present; latest in this group is the neck of a Mareotis amphora of 2nd century date. An amphora presumably of Cypriot origin bore the inscription: XAIPE (?), running in bold red letters around the body. From this context came another early lamp. Fine tableware was sadly lacking.

FUNERARY STATUE FROM TOMB 30

The limestone statue of a woman, which led to the discovery of Tomb 30, was found by accident, when the head was noticed sticking out of a trench wall washed away by winter rains. The head was nestled in a tumble of blocks, which turned out to be overlying the southern wall of Tomb 30. The head had broken off from the body of the statue; the latter was discovered directly north of it [Fig. 6]. It is safe to assume that the statue and the presumed naos superstructure in which it had once stood had been toppled from the top of the central loculus of Tomb 30, possibly by grave robbers who had dug a trench across four of the loculi.

The statue is carved in one block of limestone. It is 0.708 m together with the base. The woman is depicted frontally, standing, arms pressed to the sides, swathed in a mantle that reveals part of a simple tunic

with plain neckline underneath [Fig. 7]. The right shoulder and small pointed breast and part of the left breast are visible with some traces of blue pigment to suggest the original painted palette. The right hand is barely visible above the folds of a mantle, the left is bent at the elbow to support the end of the fabric which passes across the left shoulder. Both hands were carved with considerable precision in the rendering of the nails. The clenched left hand and the square hole in its top could indicate the presence of some object held in this hand. The vertical and slightly flaring folds on the front of the body were



Fig. 7. Funerary limestone statue from Tomb 30, after restoration (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

meant to suggest the figure. The back is practically plain with barely a hint of the mantle.

Contrasting to a degree with the block-like form of the short and squat body is the long massive neck and disproportionately big head of the statue. The face is broadest across the cheekbones, narrowing to a long triangular chin. The mouth is small, the relatively thin lips raised at the corners in a hint of smile. The nose is short and straight, the bottom part of it damaged. The almond-shaped eyes are prominent, between distinctly marked lids that join at both corners of the eyeball. The long brows fall somewhat at the ends, the right one

visibly higher than the left. The forehead is plain and triangular, and quite high. The hairdo is plain and smooth with a short partition above the forehead and a small corkscrew lock in the center. Obviously thick and bushy, the hair is pulled back smoothly and gathered together with a strap. Two corkscrew locks of uneven length descend from behind the ears of the figure, on either side of the massive neck with its two discernible fleshy folds. In each ear with prominent schematically rendered helix and tragus features, there is a round loop earring.

The statue appears to be the product of a provincial carving workshop from the northwestern coast of Egypt (the so-called Libyan nome).⁴

GRAVE 15

About 0.40 m from the south wall of the main part of Tomb 30, a simple grave was discovered [Fig. 8]. The box superstructure consisted of a mound of sand mixed with lime debris and potsherds, cased in flat irregular stones, most of which had been damaged and scattered. The eastern and western ends of the grave, 2.10 m apart, were marked by regular slabs, standing upright. The grave itself was a rectangular pit, some 2.00 m long and 0.55 m wide, cut into the bedrock to a depth of 0.55 m. It was covered with four slabs of different size and packed in with smaller stones along the outside perimeter, indicating that a layer of sand at least 15 cm deep existed around Tomb 30 when this grave was dug. A concentration of altar-stones and broken pottery was found immediately to the east of the eastern upright slab, even in level with the first layer of offerings made in front of Tomb 30.



Fig. 8. Grave 15 with Tomb 30 in the background, view from the southwest (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

⁴ For other statues, of men, from Marina, see W.A. Daszewski et al., "Excavations at Marina el-Alamein 1987-1988", *MDAIK* 46 (1990), 29, Fig. 14d,e.

HYPOGEUM TOMB T21

Only a small part of a room, probably belonging to a funerary mausoleum, was uncovered in the course of salvage works carried out by inspectors from the Egyptian Antiquities Organization over a decade ago. In the previous season, our attention was drawn to the presence of three mosaic emblemata in the floor of this room.⁵ This prompted us to complete the excavation of the mausoleum of this hypogeum. Work concentrated on clearing the aboveground structure and tracing the course of the staircase leading to the underground part of the tomb and the courtyard outline [Fig. 9].

The aboveground mausoleum was cleared of debris and sand, including a few-meter thick layer of modern construction debris left by workers developing the tourist area in the past two decades. The ancient structure that was subsequently uncovered appears to be one of the largest and most important tombs discovered in Marina so far.

The mausoleum, which faces north like all the other tombs of this type on the site, consists of a colonnaded portico preceding a large hall with banquet beds and a set of rooms of domestic function on either side of the hall.

The aboveground part of the mausoleum is 13.10 m long N-S on the western side and 12.10 m long N-S on the eastern side. The total width is 14.35 m (E-W). The structure was entered via a set of six steps (2.73 m wide) leading up to the portico, which was situated 1.10 m above the ancient ground level [Fig. 11]. Traces of a gate installed at the top of the steps were observed (1.88 m wide). A balustrade seems to have run between the columns of

the portico. There were six columns in the façade. A narrow test trench dug in front of the mausoleum revealed, at a distance of about 4-5 m from the structure, the tumbled remains of the entablature including two courses of stone blocks and the cornice with dentils, the blocks of the cornice all marked with stonemason's marks, i.e. Greek letters, on the underside [Fig. 10]. The blocks were found in order, the façade having obviously collapsed in an earthquake. On the eastern side, between the blocks and the mausoleum, a pseudo-Nabatean capital (of the Marina el-Alamein type) was discovered along with a few column drums. Presumably, the entire portico, which was 3.78 m deep (N-S), was constructed in the same order.

A doorway 2.10 m wide, framed with engaged columns, led from the portico into the central hall of the mausoleum. There were also two lateral entrances on either side (0.70 m wide). The banquet hall (6.54 m E-W by 7.62 m N-S) was furnished with two masonry beds (4.90 m by 1.45-1.48 m; H. 0.60-0.68 m). The paved passage between the couches, where the mosaic emblemata had been discovered, was 2.52 m wide. Narrow passages for servants were left behind each of the beds (0.50 m wide). Small lateral entrances (0.88 m wide) led to two side rooms in the northern part of the structure and to a room with a cistern in the southeastern corner (width of the passage 1.08 m); another doorway (0.88 m wide) in the southwestern corner of the hall gave entrance to the kitchen and latrine complex. A passage (1.10 m wide) opened centrally off the southern wall of the banquet hall, leading to the staircase that

5 Cf. PAM XIII, op. cit., 79 and Fig. 5.

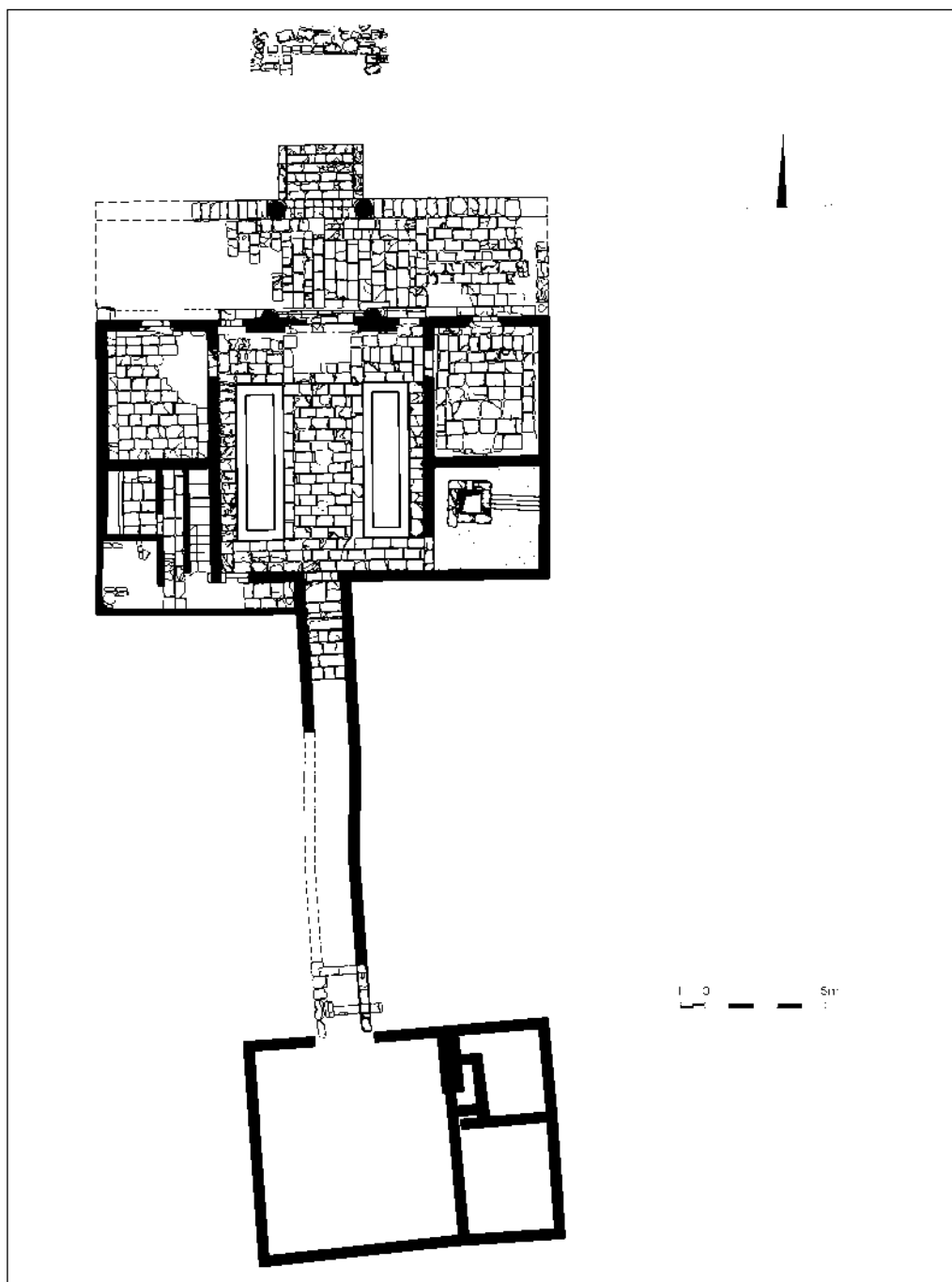


Fig. 9. Plan of the investigated parts of hypogeum Tomb 21
(Drawing A. Błaszczyk)



Fig. 10. Cornice blocks of the façade of the mausoleum of Tomb 21. Note pseudo-Nabatean capital in right foreground (Photo W.A. Daszewski)



Fig. 11 Façade of the aboveground mausoleum of Tomb 21, view from the north (Photo W.A. Daszewski)



*Fig. 12. Cistern and channel in the northeastern room of the mausoleum of Tomb 21
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)*



*Fig. 13. Complex of kitchen, latrine and room in the western part of the mausoleum of Tomb 21,
view from the south (Photo W.A. Daszewski)*

descended into the courtyard and burial chambers. Only the upper parts of the perimeter wall have been cleared, giving an estimated size of the courtyard 6.40 m (N-S) by 5.75 m (E-W). Unusually for this kind of tomb, there were two rooms built onto the eastern wall of the courtyard, on the same level as the mausoleum in front (3.10 m wide E-W by 3.50 m and 2.60 m long respectively N-S). The staircase was 14.40 m long and was covered with monolithic beams of stone (1.30 m long).

The northeastern side room of the mausoleum was entered from both the banquet hall and the portico. The main doorway, from the portico, had door jambs and was 0.88 m wide. The room measured 4.15 m N-S by 3.30 m E-W. The next room to the south on this side, entered only from the banquet hall, contained a cistern [Fig. 12]. The rectangular head of the cistern entrance was constructed of stone blocks (1.30x1.40 m). A channel of stone blocks leading from the eastern wall of the mausoleum supplied the cistern with water, presumably rainfall collected from the roof of the structure. The cistern itself was of irregular plan, extending about 4.70-4.90 m west of the shaft entrance and 5.20 m N-S. The shaft was 2.20 m deep with a wall of c. 0.50 m rising above the lime floor in the room. The known height of the cistern (which was not fully excavated) is about 2.00 m.

On the opposite side of the mausoleum, the northwestern room, 4.13 m N-S by 3.20 m E-W, was entered from the portico (doorway with jambs, 0.88 m wide). A lateral doorway in the eastern wall gave access to the banquet hall. The southwestern corner of the mausoleum held a complex of paved rooms of domestic function, including a kitchen and latrine. It was entered from the banquet hall via a narrow corridor, 0.80 m wide, which gave access to

a set of stairs [Fig. 13] rising to the north (five steps, 0.67 m wide) and a parallel narrow passage, 0.68 m wide, off which a latrine (1.60 m E-W by 2.07 m N-S) opened. The sewage channel ran along the west wall, 0.40 m wide, sloping down to the north where an outflow opening was pierced in the outer west wall of the mausoleum. Opposite the latrine and behind the stone staircase, there were two small compartments of unknown function, possibly the substructure of the upper part of the flight of steps, which may have been of wood, leading to a terrace roof.

In the southwestern corner of the complex, a kitchen area was separated out with a partition wall of upright slabs; this space, which measured 2.20 m N-S by 1.75 m E-W, was not paved and was entered directly from the corridor. Inside, installations occupied each of the three corners [Fig. 13]. To the right of the entrance, upright slabs, all 0.50 m high, supported on a flat slab, formed a compartment 0.30 m wide and 0.50 m long in the northeastern corner. In the northwestern corner, another set of two slabs, 0.60 m high, formed a compartment 0.70 m long and 0.16 m wide along the north wall. Finally, in the corner opposite the entrance, a column drum and some blocks had been installed. This installation, next to which a concentration of burned bricks was observed, was 0.30 m wide and 0.50 m long, rising 0.30-0.50 m above ground level. Next to it, the neck of an amphora (of Mareotis type, dated to the 2nd-3rd century AD) had been inserted into the ground as a form of later drain. The assemblage from the kitchen area consisted of considerable quantities of pottery, both storage amphorae and cooking pots, casseroles with lids, pans and deep plates both Egyptian and imported, dated mostly to the 1st-2nd century AD. Glass

was also represented, including a perfume bottle (Isings form 6/26a, cf. Goethert-Polaschek form 70a), indented beakers, jugs, and bowls. In the compartment to the right of the door, a faience plate was discovered, representing a type popular in the middle of the 1st century AD.

The southwestern part of the mausoleum appears to have undergone modifications, with stone blocks and lime debris

being used to reinforce the walls, especially the southern one, which supported the steps.

Based on current evidence, Tomb 21 with its mausoleum appears to have been constructed in the 1st century AD. It seems to have remained in use for about two centuries, after which it was probably abandoned. Some occupation of ruined parts of the mausoleum, including the cistern, occurred later in antiquity.

FIELDWORK IN THE TOWN CENTER

In the town center, where explorations had begun in previous campaigns, the fieldwork this year was concentrated on the extensive southern portico and an E-W street with adjoining structures, constituting an extension of this portico to the east [Fig. 14].

SOUTH PORTICO

The South Portico was cleared completely [Figs. 15-17]. It turned out to be 18.50 m long (E-W) and 8.40 m wide (N-S). An exedra projected off the middle of the southern wall (excavated in previous seasons);⁶ it was 2.80 m wide and 2.20 m deep. Lining the southern wall of the portico together with the exedra and the western wall of the portico there was a limestone bench supported on lion's paws [Fig. 16]. The seat was 0.40-0.42 m wide, the legs with seat 0.46 m high. The portico was furnished with a double colonnade, each tract being 3.60 m wide. The columns in the two rows were of a uniform height equal to 3.60 m; the bases at the foot measuring 0.62 m in diameter, the drums from 0.48 to 0.44 m in diameter. The column capitals represented a simplified Ionic order. The plaster finishing of these

capitals has survived in good condition, even preserving traces of red and green painting in places. The drums were also given a stucco finishing, rendering shallow fluting separated by narrow listels. The column bases, also plastered, were painted black.

The southern portico stopped serving its functions together with the rest of the town square in the late 5th or early 6th century. Numerous traces of fireplaces testified to the continued use of the dilapidated structure by nomads. The entire architectural order and sumptuous decoration of the portico can be reconstructed based on the architectural elements found in the ruins and the sections of painted plaster, including pieces preserving traces of gilding. Further bits of a marble plaque with an inscription in Greek were recovered from the debris in the central part of the portico, near the wall with bench. Once these bits were joined to parts discovered previously in 2001, the inscription was read as a simple commemorative text dedicated to the Roman emperor, either Trajan or Hadrian [Fig. 18].⁷ The assemblage from the portico

6 Cf. PAM XIII, op. cit., 81-85.

7 The inscription will be presented separately by Dr. Adam Łajtar of Warsaw University.

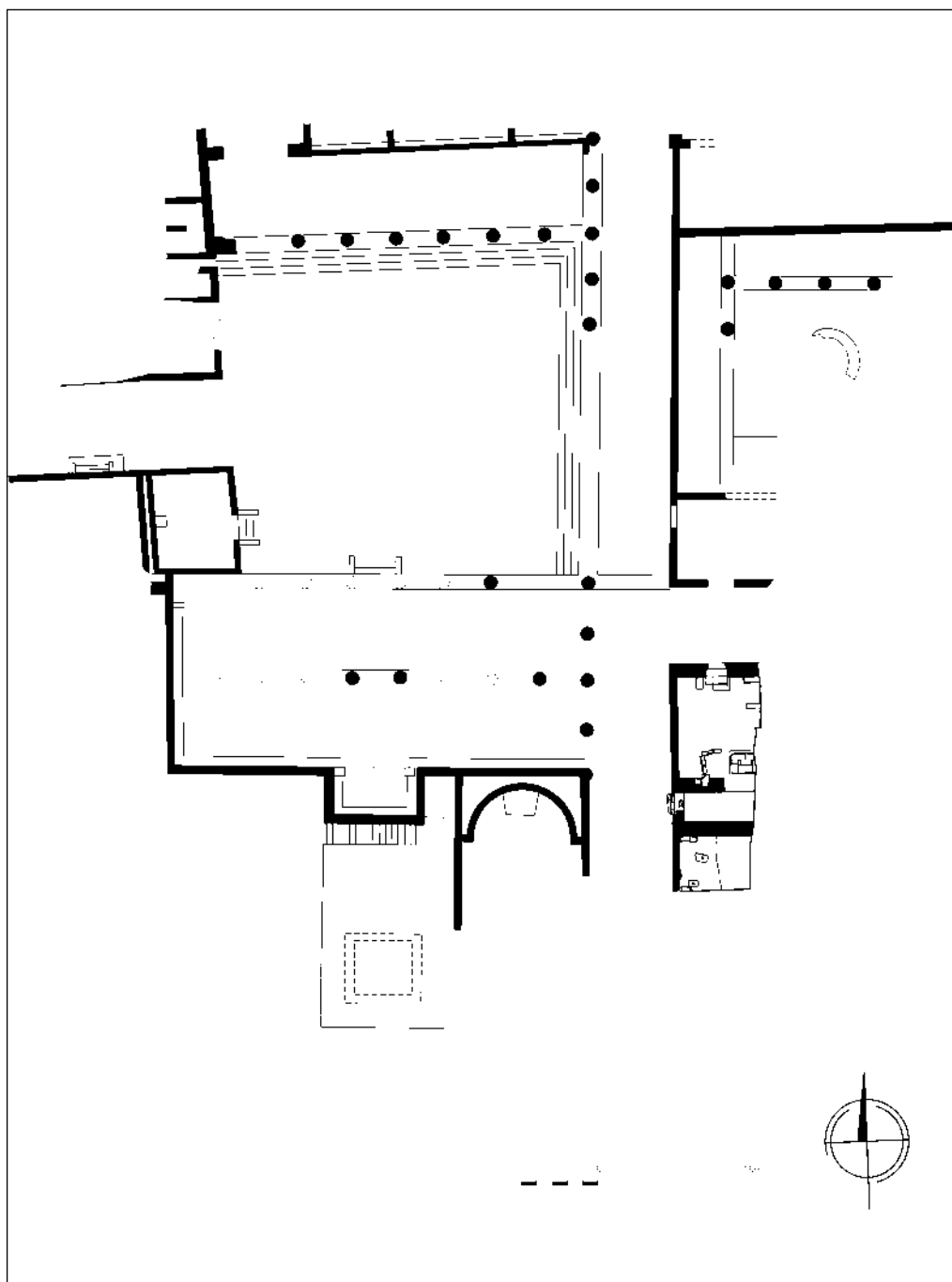


Fig 14. Plan of the ancient town center, state after the season in 2004
(Drawing A. Błaszczyk)



*Fig. 15. South Portico, view from the west
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)*



Fig. 16. Toppled columns of the South Portico colonnade. Note ruined bench along the back wall of the portico (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

consisted of fragments of pottery, glass vessels, bronze and iron nails, and three much worn bronze coins of the 1st and 2nd century AD.

The assortment of sherds from the debris in the portico area represented various imported amphorae types: Mauretanian, Pseudo-Koan, Cypriot "pinched amphorae" and some Early Gaza amphorae – predecessors of the common LRA 4 type. The assemblage could be dated to the 3rd century at the earliest. In the layers deposited immediately on the pavement of the portico, the assemblage also appeared to be mixed, for it showed very similar cross-section of wares and types. Here again Mauretanian amphorae abounded, with some fragments of "pinched amphorae",

Pseudo-Koan and Cyrenaican. Mareotic vessels (AE3) were also present. A dozen or so fragments of Cypriot Sigillata of 2nd century date completed the picture.

STRUCTURES EAST OF THE SOUTH PORTICO

East of the portico excavations continued to clear a paved street that extended of the corner of the Town Square [cf. *Fig. 14*], the depth of overlying deposits reaching even up to 2.00 m. (Another section of the same street had been explored further to the east of this area in 2000).⁸ This street was 3.45 m wide. At the point where it joined the South Portico, a branch, which was 3.50 m wide, turned to the south. It has been traced for a distance of 14 m.

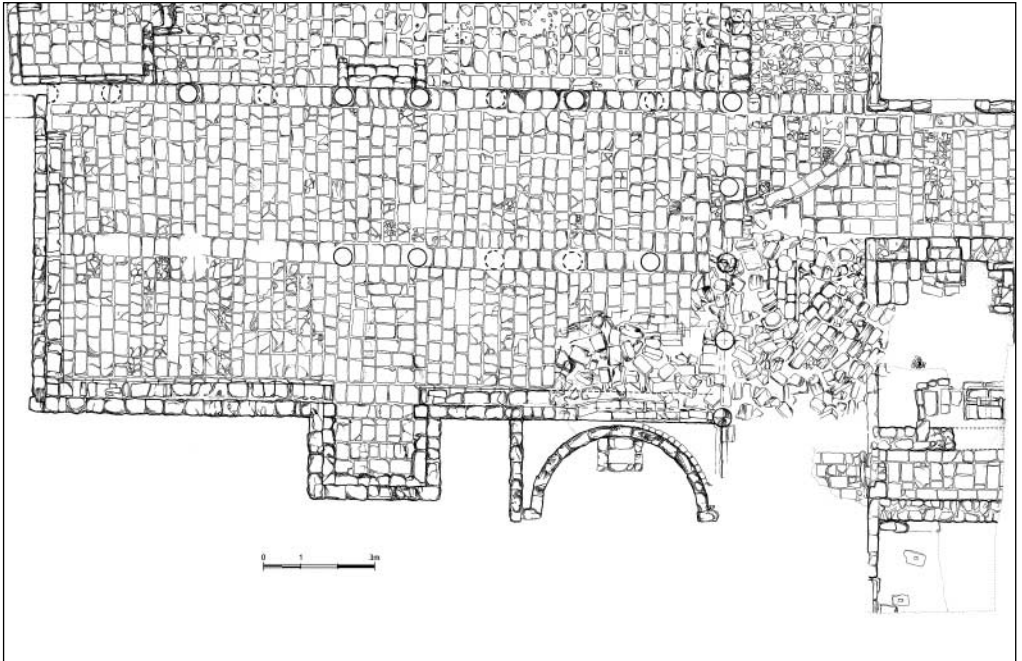


Fig. 17. Plan of the South Portico following excavations in 2004, note collapsed wall in south-eastern corner (Drawing A. Błaszczuk)

8 Cf. PAM XII, *Reports 2000* (2001), 58-61, Fig. 11.

The street running east was lined on the north side with a solid wall 0.28 m wide, extending for the entire uncovered distance of 4.37 m and ending with a doorway that led to a room, which is yet to be excavated. On the opposite side, the street wall was 0.61 m wide. A section c. 4.00 m long has been uncovered to the east and in it, 1.70 m away from the corner, a doorway 1.00 m wide with a passage through it measuring 0.80 m; at the western end, this wall turned a corner and proceeded southward for a distance of 4.50 m, thus framing a corner room (No. 1). The room was entered from the eastern street via a set of three steps (1.10 m wide including side walls) leading down to the main occupational level. The pottery content is largely similar to that recorded within the portico proper. Some earlier examples notwithstanding, the bulk of the material, consisting mostly of "pinched amphorae" and Cyrenaican and African amphorae, points to the 3rd century AD.

Eleven bronze coins were discovered in the original occupational layer, which was deposited directly on a pavement of limestone blocks [Fig. 19].⁹ The assemblage also included bronze and iron nails, a fragment of a bronze finger ring with the gemstone in place, fragments of glass. The pottery points to an earlier date. Apart from Mareotic amphorae (AE3) and some early Gazan vessels, a dozen or so fragments of Cypriot Sigillata were recorded, with the ever present footed basins/craters (P40) and small plates (P-8), all of them dated to the late 1st-early 2nd century AD.

The room's eastern boundary wall was found in the baulk and can be seen as standing to a height of 1.20 m. The wall on the south was c. 0.60 m wide. The room was renovated and reconstructed repeatedly except for the southeastern corner where shelves constructed of stone slabs had existed from the beginning [Fig. 20]. Their function remains unknown. The lower 'shelf' was c. 0.80 m wide and 0.78 m



Fig. 18. Greek inscription on a marble plaque from the South Portico
(Photo W.A. Daszewski)

⁹ Thanks are due Assoc. Prof. Barbara Lichocka (Polish Academy of Sciences), who kindly identified the coin.



Fig. 19. Bronze coin minted in Alexandria in the reign of Trajan, AD 110/111, with an imperial quadriga on the reverse (Photo I. Zych)



Fig. 20. Room with standing stone shelves in the corner, view from the north (Photo W.A. Daszewski)

high, the upper one c. 0.58 m wide and 0.64 m high. The original floor had been largely destroyed and covered with fill. In the southwestern corner, a fireplace was introduced at a level 0.10 m higher up. A vessel was dug into the fill next to the fireplace. This layer bore traces of burning throughout the room, indicating that it had been used as a kitchen at this point. Pottery in quantities and animal bones also confirm the room's function. A later floor was observed in the southern part of the room, 0.40 m higher up. A smaller unit, 1.10 m long (N-S) and at least 2.10 m wide (E-W), seems to have been introduced through the erection of a poorly constructed partition wall.

South of the corner room discussed above, another room (no. 2) could be discerned, measuring 1.30 m (N-S) by 3.12 m (E-W). The pavement here was well made of rectangular slabs (0.60 m x 0.30 m, others 0.36 m x 0.30 m; 0.50 x 0.46 m). A channel (0.20 x 0.20 m) was traced under the pavement in the northern part. Remains of wall plastering were observed in the bottom part of the walls, rising to a height of 0.20 m. On the west, this room is shut off with a wall 1.30 m long, pierced by a doorway (0.70 m wide) in the middle. The wall delimiting unit no. 2 on the south is preserved to a height of 1.10 m on the side of this room. On the other side, it

drops down to 1.70 m. The room south of this wall (no. 3) was only partly excavated this season, but already two occupational levels were clearly distinguished. On the west, the bordering wall has a doorway opening into the N-S street at this point. Inside the room, on the higher occupational level, two rectangular stone blocks with holes for vertical wooden beams were found (presumably roof or ceiling supports?). The assemblage from the two rooms included sherds of utilitarian wares: a few Kapitän II, and the usual share of Mareotic (AE3) and Nile silt amphorae, usually dated to the 2nd century AD, as well as Early Gazan vessels, accompanied by fragments of Cypriot Sigillata basins (P40) and dishes (P8). The datable material could be ascribed to the late 1st-2nd century AD. There were also some minor glass fragments, as well as a number of iron and bronze nails, and a few terracotta oil lamp fragments.

The fill overlying the ruins of this room consisted of a thick layer of stone blocks and wall plastering from the eastern wall of a basilical structure situated just south of the South Portico of the Town Square.¹⁰

Overall, the oldest occupational level in this part of the ancient town originated from the 1st century AD. The later floors were introduced at a much later date, presumably in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.

10 Cf. W.A. Daszewski, "Témoignage de l'urbanisation de la côméditerranéenne de l'Égypte à l'époque hellénistique et romaine à la lumière des fouilles de Marina el-Alamein", *BSFE* 132 (1995), 19-20.