

POLISH-EGYPTIAN RESTORATION MISSION AT KOM EL-DIKKA, ALEXANDRIA, 1992-93

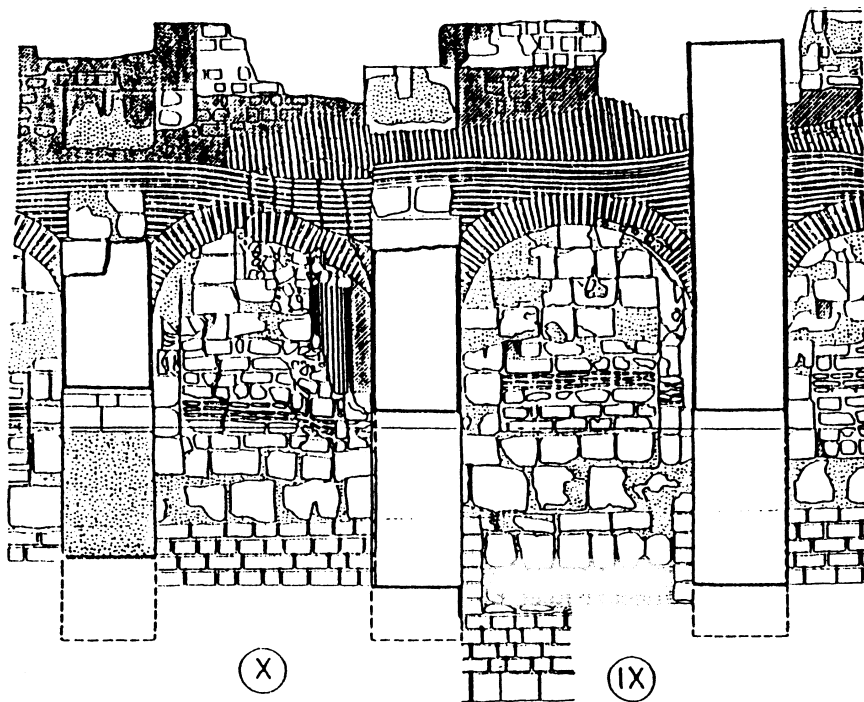
Wojciech Kołataj

In accordance with a long-term program approved by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization, the Polish-Egyptian Restoration Mission continued work in the Theater, Bath and Cisterns from October 1992 to May 1993.¹

THEATER

Following the consolidation of the unit X arcade in the theater corridor, that is, ambulacrum, the central segment was explored, removing the fill deposited after the edifice had been abandoned in the 7th century. The adjacent section of the outer wall, which also sustained heavy damage during modern construction works in 1964 before the theater was discovered, also called for immediate consolidation (Fig. 1). An inventory was made of the wall facing before the entire section was dismantled; the wall was then reassembled preserving as much of the ancient substance as could be retrieved; in many cases the original mortar in the joints was preserved, although several seriously damaged or crushed blocks had to be replaced with new ones (Fig. 2). The newly applied mortar was similar to the ancient one and composed of sand, lime, and powdered bricks with a 5% addition of white Portland cement. In the upper part of the wall, a com-

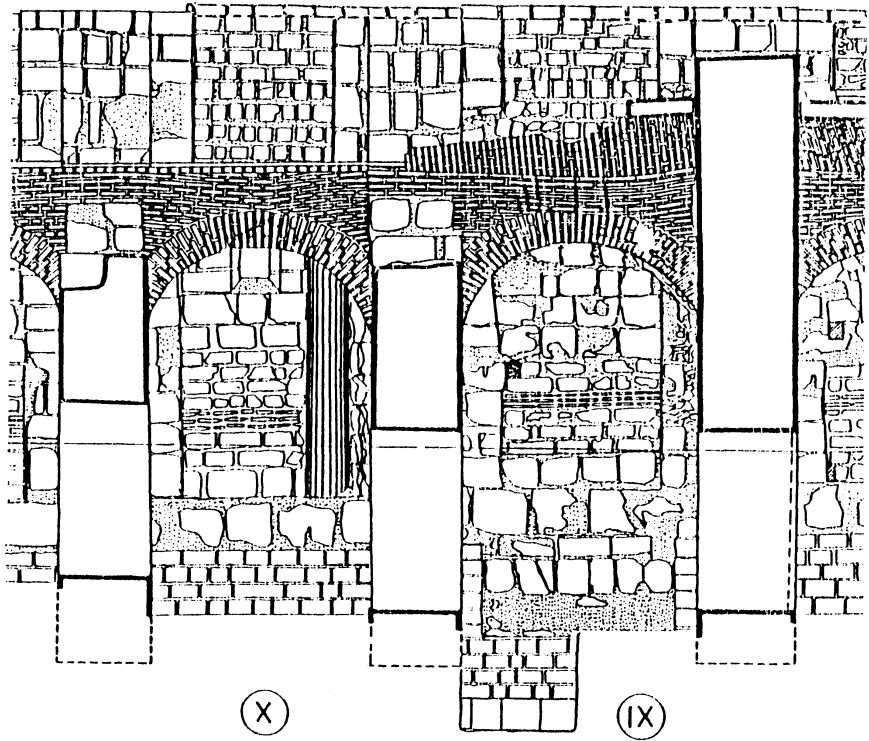
¹ The Mission headed by Dr. Wojciech Kołataj included: Dr. Jan Borkowski, architect; Dr. Grzegorz Majcherek, archaeologist, and Mr. Krzysztof Złotkowski, engineer; the EAO was represented by Inspectors – Mr. Ahmad Mousa, Mr. Ala'a ed-Din Mahrous and Mrs. Mona Shaker.



*Fig. 1. Theater. Inner face of the corridor prior to restoration.
Drawing by the author.*

pletely destroyed window frame was thoroughly restored to its original shape.

A modern concrete pillar set into the wall was left in place for structural reasons as much as educational purposes



*Fig. 2. Theater. Inner face of the corridor after restoration.
Drawing by the author.*

(removing the pillar could have caused serious damage to the wall, while it has already become part of the monument's history).

The described restorations have made archaeological explorations possible well below the floor level of the corridor. In their course, the edifice's very deep foundations were uncovered, permitting archaeological and architectural studies to be completed.

BATH

The southern portico and public latrine were the objects of restoration work in the Baths. Stone elements and voussoir stones of the vault covering the storerooms located in front of hypocaust furnace no. 3 were prepared for reassembly in the coming season. Additional clearing and safeguarding operations were also carried out. In the latrine, in order to proceed with the planned anastylosis of the peristyle, one column base was reconstructed in artificial stone.² In the coming season, two more bases are due to be restored and a column re-erected in its original position.

CISTERN

A considerable part of the eastern facade of the monument, comprising some 80 m² between buttresses III and IV, was reconstructed (Fig. 3). Between buttresses II and III, work begun on the restoration of yet another section of the wall and some 10 m² were completed by the season's end. The new facing was separated from the original sections of the wall by a layer of tar paper.

The northernmost buttress (I) was remodeled to reach its final restored shape. The wall coping of the buttress was provid-

² For its composition and relevant procedures see previous report: W. Kołataj, Conservation work at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria in the 1991-92 season, *PAM IV*, 1992, p. 8.

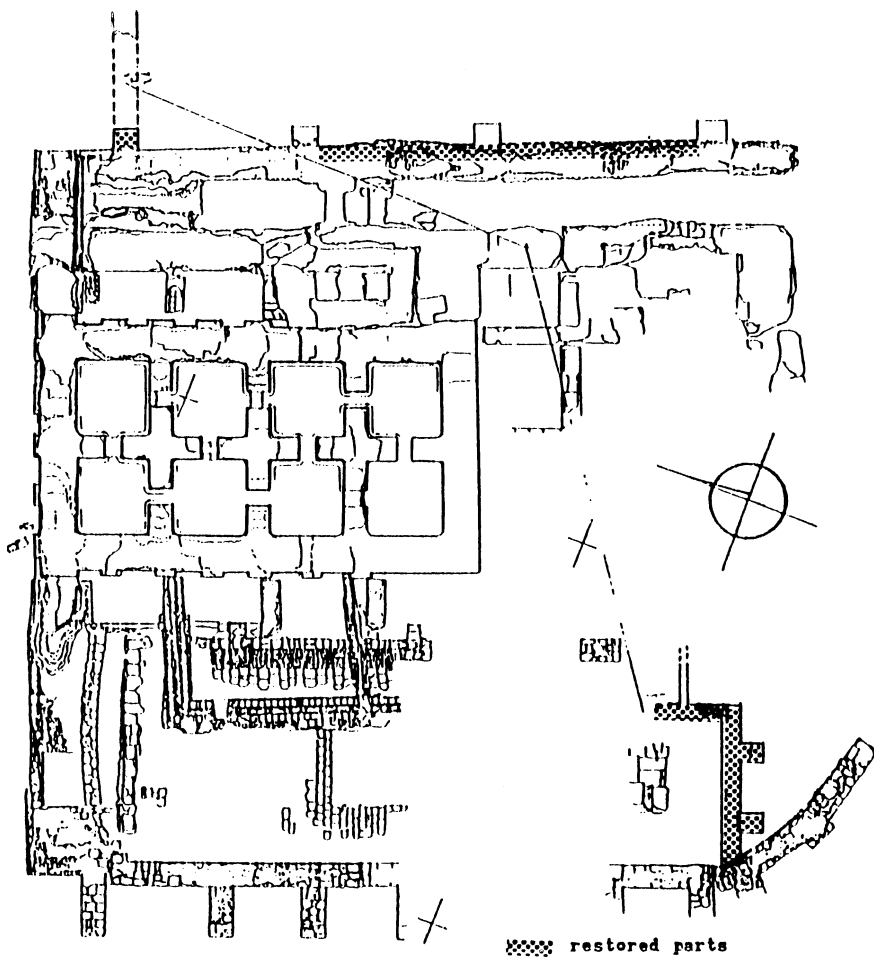


Fig 3. Cistern.
Drawing by the author.

ed with overlap in order to dispose of rainwater. A fragment of the wall comprised between the buttress and the corner of the cistern was transversally restressed, using methods already proven in the conservation of the monument.³

The southwestern corner of the cistern was reconstructed on account of the need to prepare a path for visitors as part of a tourist development plan for the site. The restored section will at the same time serve as a retaining wall for the escarpment (Fig. 3). The wall, made of large blocks c. 20-40 x 30-40 x 40-50 cm, was built on preserved relics using lime mortar and separating the new parts from the original ones with tar paper. The wall, which had most probably collapsed during a 5th or 6th century earthquake, was in Byzantine times encased inside a new one of irregular shape intended as the closing of the cistern complex on the south. The Byzantine wall was recorded and then covered up.

³ The method was described in *PAM III* 1991 (1992), p. 15f.