

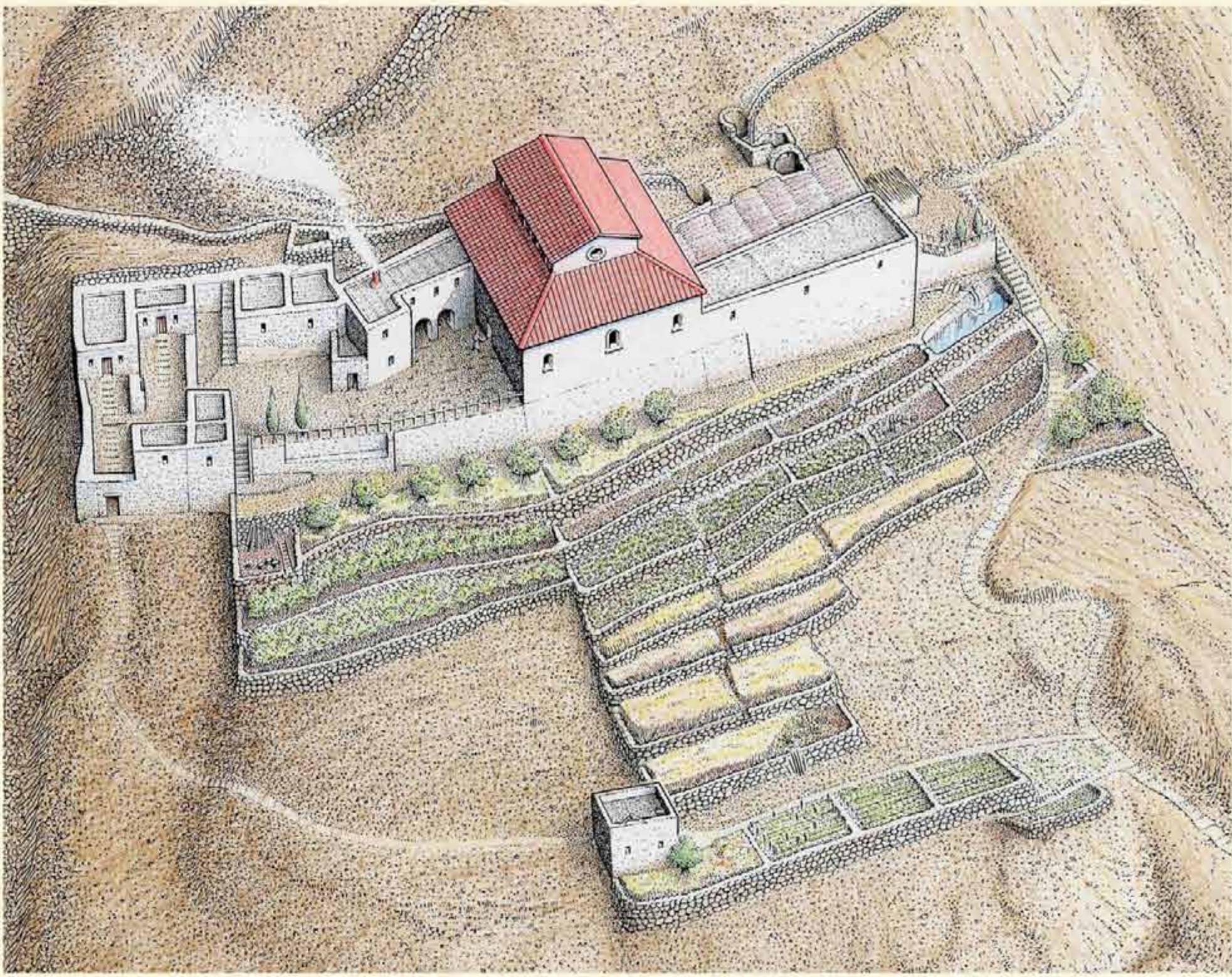
Heritage Management of the Monastery of Aghios Lot at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata in Jordan

From the outset of the Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata project in 1988 every effort was made by its director, Dr Konstantinos D. Politis, to involve the local community, emphasize that the cultural heritage of the site belonged to them and try to relate the archaeological discoveries to the realities of their present lives. This was particularly challenging because the Ghor es-Safi is a relatively underdeveloped region of Jordan and consequently its inhabitants are financially disadvantaged and inadequately educated. The most immediate and obvious benefit for them was the employment offered by the project. During the project’s seasons from 1988 to 2003, which were sponsored by the British Museum, a core of the local labourers would return to work at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata which provided a great financial advantage to them and their extended families. Eventually, with the establishment of a Department of Antiquities office on-site and the increasing demand for ancient sites to be guarded, some of these workmen were able to secure permanent jobs. The archaeological and conservation skills which some of the workers had acquired from on-site training further enhanced their employment opportunities.

With the completion of the archaeological excavation of the Monastery of Aghios Lot, its development as a site with tourism potential created further opportunities for the local community. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan made substantial funds available to consolidate all the ancient structures, re-build a long protective wall above the site and improve visitor accessibility by building a road and a stone stairway leading up to the site. The conservation and the re-installation of the mosaic pavements was sponsored by the European Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments under the supervision of Dr Stefania Chlouveraki and the project director. The study and design for a protective shelter above them was made by Dr Zaki Aslan and is awaiting funding.

Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata was proclaimed a *maqam* (holy site of Islam) by H.M. the late King Hussein in 1995. In 2004 Jordan proposed the site should be on UNESCO’s World Heritage List. It is currently on the Tentative List, showing how valued the site has become.

Finally in 2005, the building of a museum at Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata guaranteed the permanent protection of the site and ensured long-term benefits for the local community. Furthermore, the displaying of archaeological finds from the excavations demonstrated, for the first time, the presence of a long local history thereby creating a sense of heritage. This was the aim of the Hellenic Society for Near Eastern Studies which designed the exhibition.



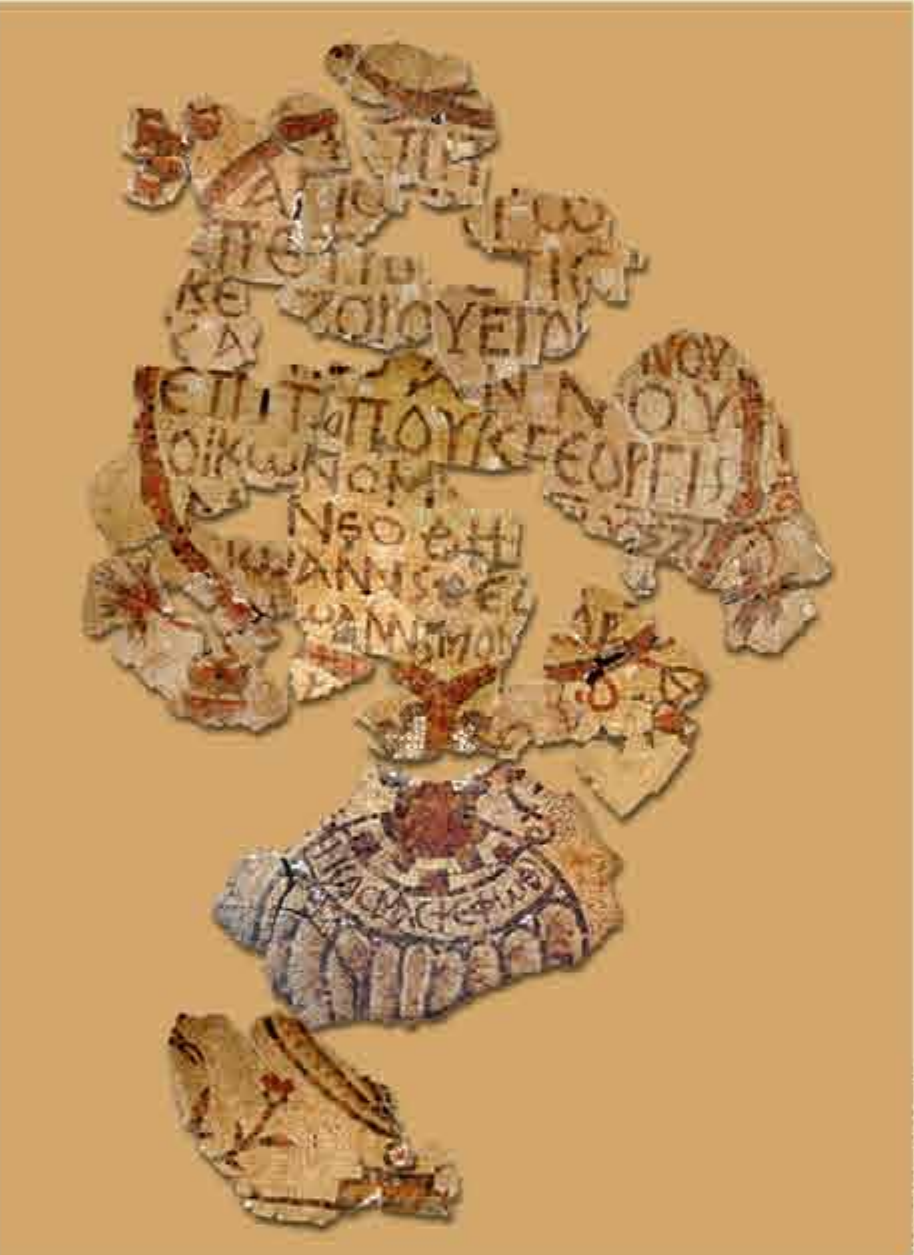
Reconstruction drawing of the Monastery of Aghios Lot



Aerial view of the Monastery of Aghios Lot after excavations showing protective wall above and stairway below



Installing lifted mosaic in the site museum



Digital restoration of lifted mosaic



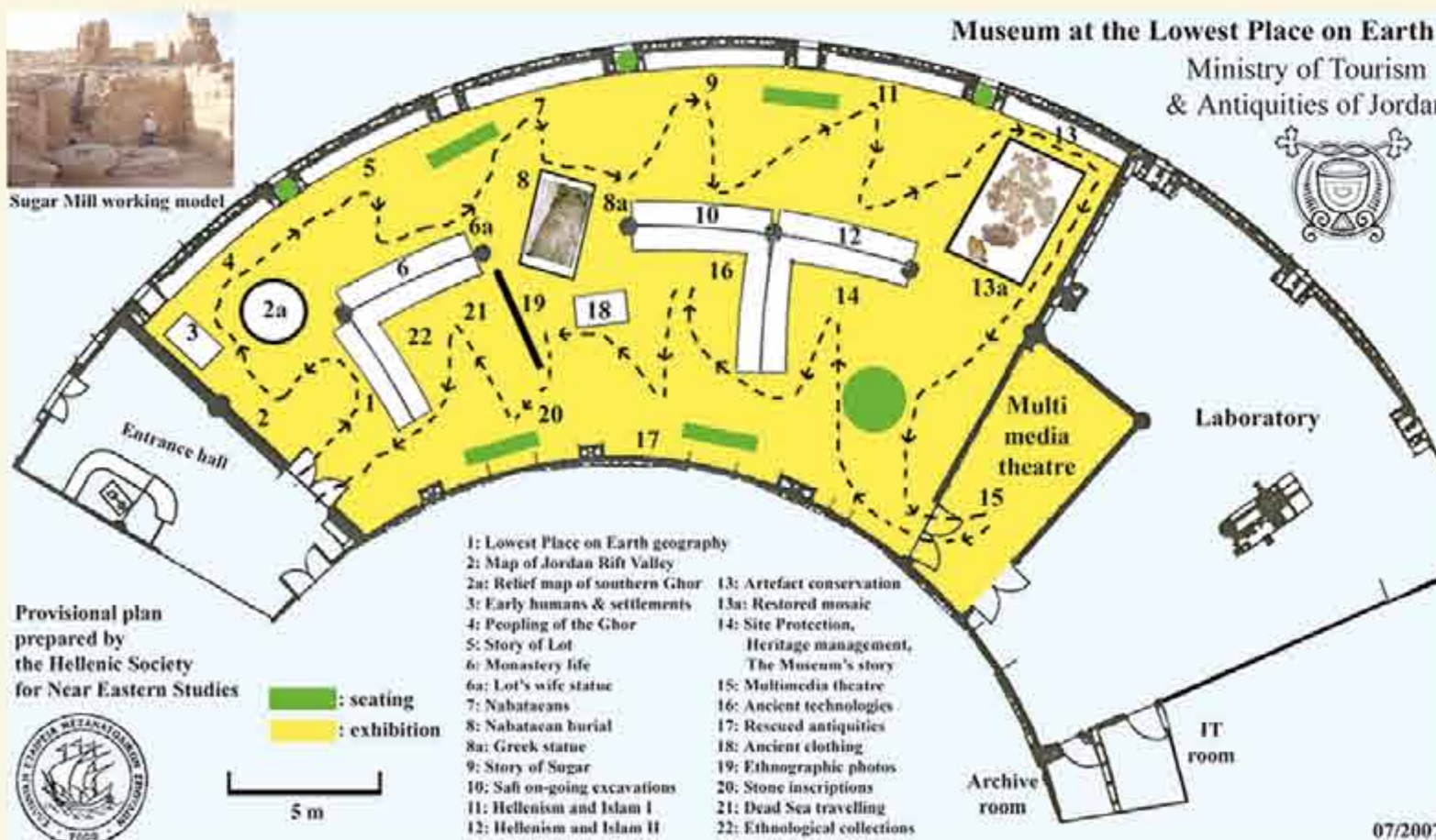
Moulded bases for lifted mosaic



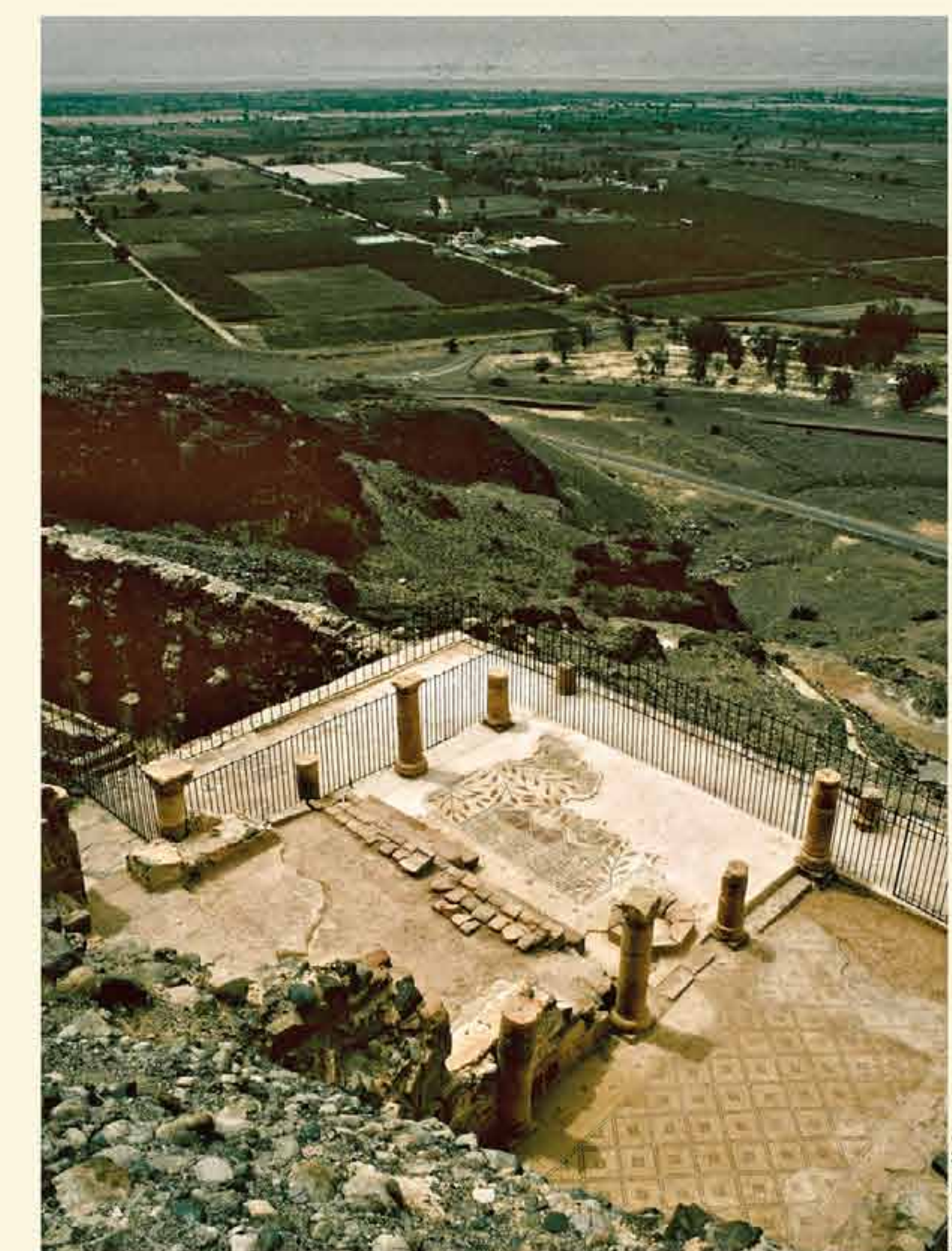
Conserving lifted mosaic



Impressions of mosaic-maker's footprints on lime mortar in which mosaic was laid



Exhibition plan for site museum



View from above Church of Aghios Lot showing conserved mosaics and security fence



Re-installing the mosaic in the Church of Aghios Lot



Blessing ceremony in the Church of Aghios Lot



Site museum with lowest place on earth in background



Studies and designs for protective shelter over mosaics at Church of Aghios Lot



Aerial view of the Monastery of Aghios Lot showing consolidated ancient structures and foundations, and security fence