

MARINA EL-ALAMEIN, 1994

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In February and March exploration of the main, western necropolis of the town was continued in several areas.¹ Excavations were carried out around the tombs excavated during previous seasons and on new sites.

To the south and east of "pyramid tombs" 2 and 3 located in the eastern part of the necropolis, closer to the town, a few large and low enclosures, roughly rectangular in plan were uncovered.² They were 2.50 to 3.50 m long and 1.30 to 1.60 m wide, 0.60 m high. All of them were made of vertically positioned flat slabs of limestone set side by side to form thin enclosure walls around a central core filled with small stones and sand. The tombs thus formed groups of three or four, suggesting family use. Usually a group of "prism tombs" adjoined one of the larger tombs decorated with columns or pillars. This arrangement gives the impression that less important family members were buried close to a leading personality. One such "prism tomb" was explored this season. After removing the filling of stones and sand, a trench hewn in bedrock and covered with flat slabs of limestone was uncovered. Inside the trench, under a layer of sand and small stones a skeleton was found at the bottom flattened by the weight of the fill. The bones belonged to a man 25-34 years of age. There were no accompanying

¹ The Mission directed by the author included Prof. Dr. Zofia Sztetyło, Dr. Grzegorz Majcherek, archaeologists; Mr. Janusz Bułat and Mr. Jarosław Dobrowolski, architects; Dr. Maria Kaczmarek, anthropologist; Mr. Waldemar Jerke, photographer. The Egyptian Antiquities Organization was represented by Mr. Ezzat El-Hamahmy, Chief Inspector of Hammam. It is to him and Dr. Kamal Fahmy, as well as Mr. Faisal Ashmawy of the Direction of the Organization that we would like to express our gratitude for the help they gave us throughout the season.

² Cf. *PAM V* 1993 (1994), pp. 27-29, Fig. 4.

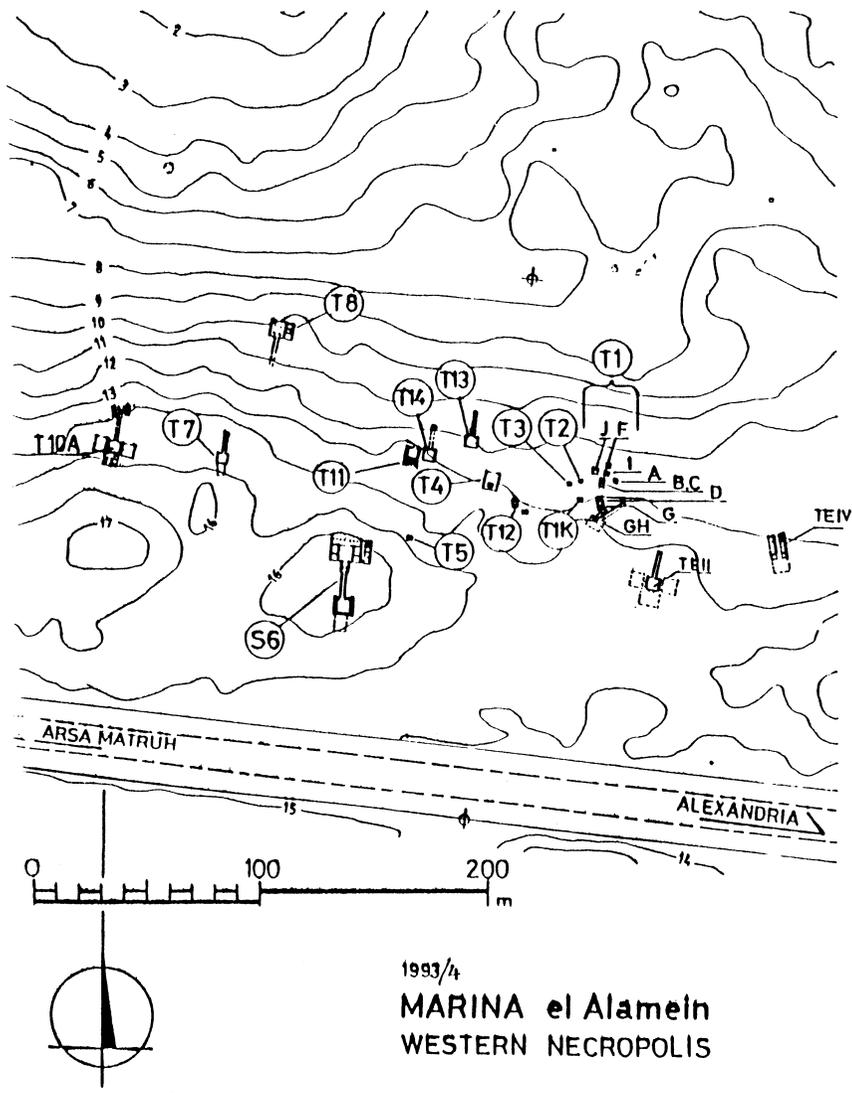
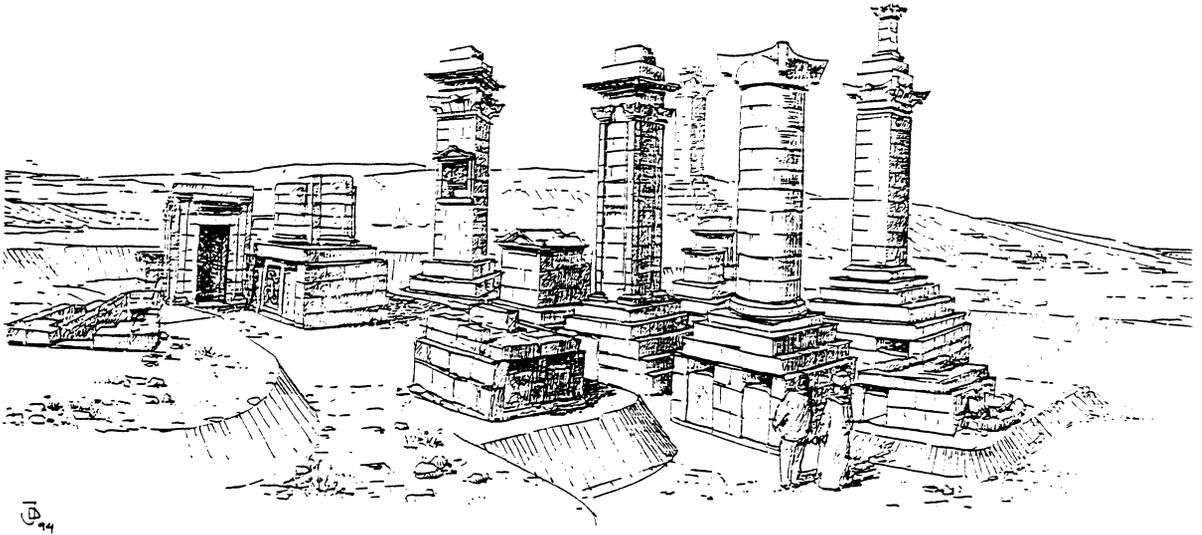


Fig. 1. Marina el-Alamein – western necropolis.



30

193

Fig. 2. Necropolis of Marina – reconstruction.

objects. The prisms seem to have been roughly contemporaneous or slightly younger than the large tombs with pillars which are usually assigned to the 1st century AD.

A few meters further south yet another "pillar tomb", T1K, was uncovered. It was of a type closely related to tombs T1A, T1B and T1J,³ but apparently it represented an earlier stage in the development. Instead of the usual box-like lower part with loculi, a square base consisting of three steps, each approximately 30 cm high, was erected on top of a trench hewn in bedrock. Upon the base a rectangular pillar with a "Nabatean" capital on top, characteristic of Marina, was set up. In the middle of the pillar, on the east side, there was a small niche with a pediment containing the relief of a man reclining upon a couch. Total height of the tomb was about or over 6 m. The tomb must have been destroyed by a quake. The pillar blocks had fallen in a northeastern direction, covering a group of "prism tombs". A date for the tomb T1K is difficult to establish since no accompanying objects were found. It would seem, however, that this tomb is somewhat earlier than the fully developed box-like pillar tombs.

Yet another tomb, T12, belonging to this last group was found southwest of T1K. Upon the stepped base set upon a box with three loculi there was a rectangular pillar with a simplified ("Nabatean") capital on top.⁴ Upon the capital a sculpture in the round of Horus in falcon form was set upon a small base. Fragments of similar statues were found in previous seasons close to other tombs in the area. They and figures of lions seem to have been the usual decoration of these tombs. The tomb was about 6.50 m high. To the south of the main box with loculi, an additional one (T12A) was added at a later date. It contained two chronologically differ-

³ Ibidem and *PAM III*, 1991 (1992), pp. 29-32, Fig. 4.

⁴ *PAM V*, 1993 (1994), pp. 34-37, Fig. 1.

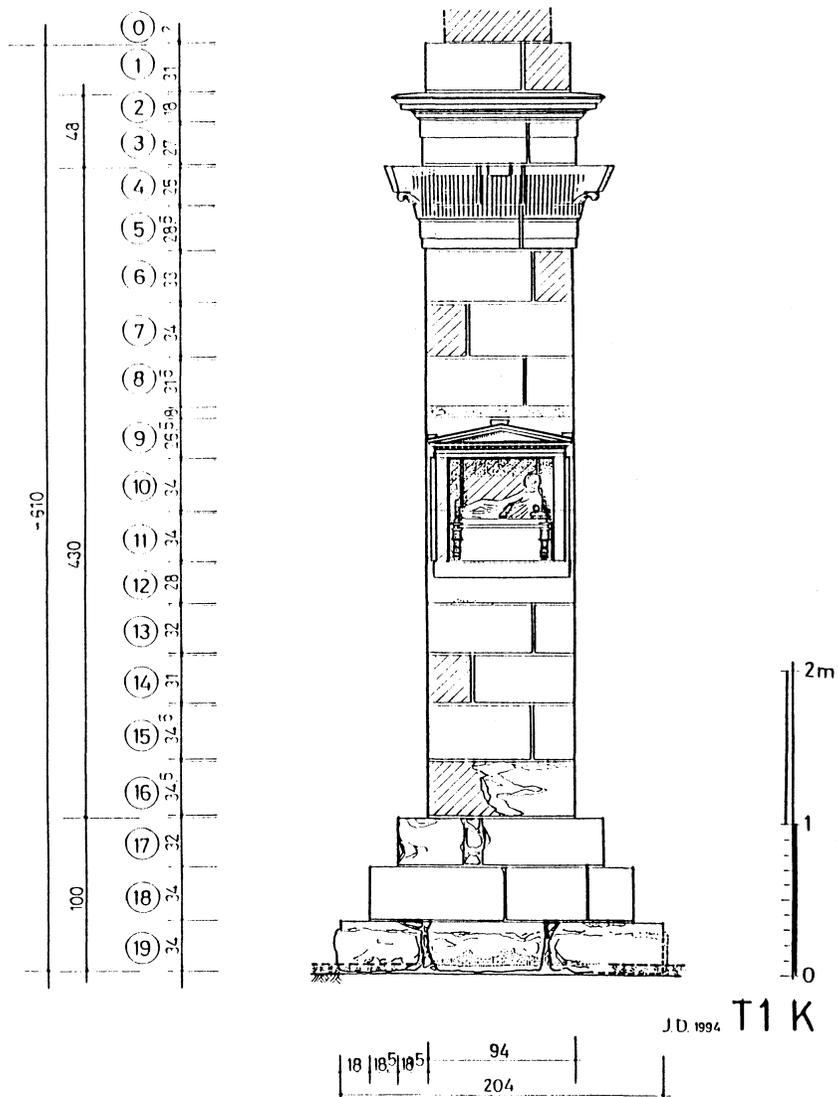


Fig. 3. Reconstruction of "Pillar tomb" T1K.

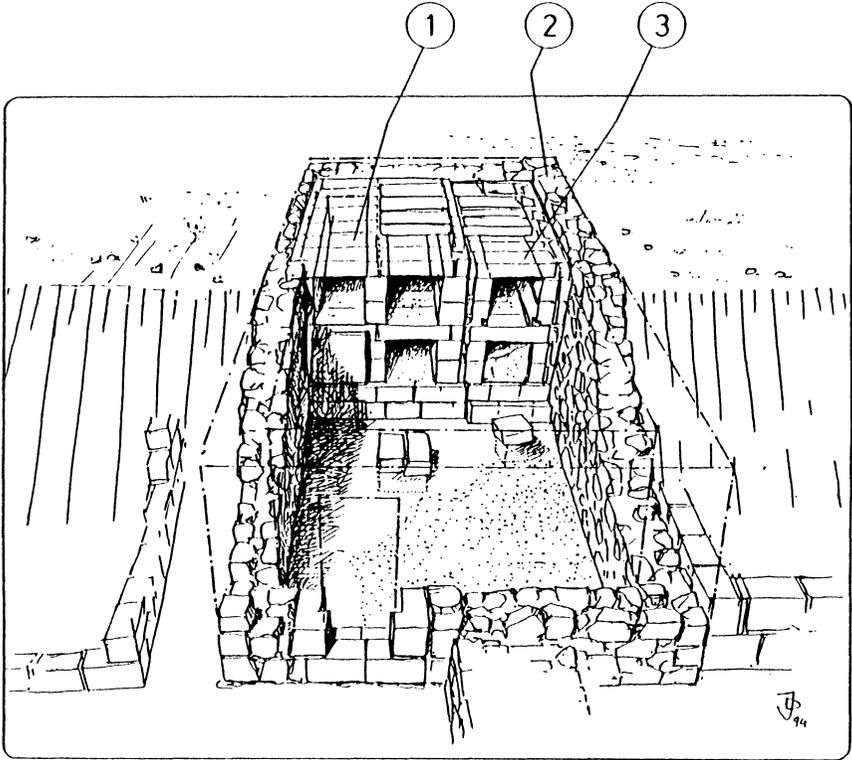
ent burials. The bones of the earlier one were pushed aside to make room for the second body. Tomb T12 was also destroyed by an earthquake. The blocks of the pillar fell southeast upon yet another tomb, T12A, which had the form of a parallelepiped (L. 2.57 m, W. 1.23 m, H. 1.70 m) with flat roof and two burials inside, set on two levels one above the other.⁵ Both were completely destroyed.

On the north slope of the plateau facing the sea, tomb T11, identified during the past seasons was excavated (Fig. 4). The tomb represents a new type in Marina funerary architecture. The construction consisted of two parts. A large, almost square box (W. 2.21 m, H. 4.50 m, L. 3.30 m) with two superimposed rows each of three loculi was built into the slope and surrounded with a temenos wall set close to the sides of the box. On the front, the wall enclosed an open court 4.50 m long and 3.20 m large. A door in the north part of the wall gave access to the court, the floor of which was reinforced with lime mortar, especially well preserved in the northwestern corner. In the south of the court, two offering slabs were found on floor level. In the sand fill above them, two more slabs set upon different levels were uncovered during excavations, indicating that they had been added when the original floor level had risen due to drifted sand. Pottery sherds and oil lamps found on the lowest level inside the court suggest a date in the 1st century AD for the construction of the tomb, while fragments of amphorae of Mau 27-28 and Dressel 2 types, as well as amphorae from the Mareotis region indicate that the tomb remained in use, possibly well into the 3rd century AD.

Work continued on hypogeum T10A uncovered during previous seasons.⁶ The tomb is a large complex consisting of an aboveground heroon and a long corridor-staircase leading underground to an open court and three funerary chambers

⁵ W.A. Daszewski, *MDAIK* 46, 1990, pp. 30-31, pl. 16 a,b.

⁶ *PAM* V, pp. 31-32, Fig. 5.



MARINA el Alamein
1994

T 11

Fig. 4. Tomb T11 - reconstruction: 1, 3 - loculi, 2 - temenos wall.

with loculi. The main funerary chamber has now been cleared of sand. Contrary to our expectations based upon parallels, the chamber was not provided with benches along the side walls. Instead of them, an altar was found cut out of bedrock in the middle of the rear wall.

Further cleaning has also been carried out inside the open court, revealing that each side of the court was different. On the south there were two square pillars tapering slightly towards the top. On the east, a screen wall with a large central opening and two windows on the sides took the place of pillars, separating the funerary chamber from the court. On the west, there were two square pillars provided with low square bases, projecting only to the front. On the south and north, two corner pillars were provided with small stands or shelves cut out of the rock some 60 cm above floor level. The centre of the court was occupied by a large altar, square in shape, 1.23 m high, cut out of bedrock. Inside the main funerary chamber most of the loculi were empty. Only a few contained scanty remains of skeletons in poor condition, identified in a few cases as belonging to two men, three women and a child. East of T11 two large hypogea, T13 and T14, oriented north-south, were localized this season. Only parts of them have been excavated.

T13. A staircase, some 10 m long, partly hewn in bedrock and partly built of masonry blocks, was excavated entirely only in its northern section. On the south, the tops of side walls and a ceiling made of 2 m-long slabs of limestone were uncovered. Also the tops of the walls protecting the court against sand were cleared, and measured, indicating that the court was 5.50 m long and 5.80 m wide. A number of pottery sherds of Cypriot Sigillata found next to the entrance of the staircase provide a date in the 1st century AD.

T14. The northern part of the staircase was uncovered, 1.40 m wide, along with the tops of walls of the court (5.66 x 5.87 m). While clearing the rear wall of the court, at a depth of 3.50 m below the present level, the upper part of the entrance to the funerary chamber was discovered. The chamber, which was left unexplored, contained multiple loculi set in two superimposed rows along the rear and side walls.

To summarize the findings, a developmental sequence of different tombs on the western necropolis has been established. The simplest tombs were trenches hewn in bedrock and covered with flat slabs of limestone. There followed trench tombs with aboveground structures in the form of stepped pyramids or stepped bases with columns or pillars. The next stage in the development is represented by box-like tombs with loculi provided with pillars and decorative sculpture on top. Temenos tombs with inbuilt boxes with loculi set in superimposed rows are yet another type of funerary structure.⁷ Finally there are two types of large hypogea. The first one consists of a monumental staircase leading to the court and funerary chambers, the second one is made up of two distinct parts: the aboveground heroon and the underground court with funerary chambers. The earliest tombs can be assigned to the late 2nd century BC. The greatest development of the necropolis took place in the late 1st century BC and in the course of the 1st century AD. Some tombs remained in use late into the 3rd century AD.

⁷ W.A Daszewski, *MDAIK*, p. 30, pl. 15h.