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Marina El-Alamein, 1993

Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 5, 21-33

1994

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In March 1993 field work continued at the ancient town site around which northern Egypt's largest tourist center, Marina el-Alamein, has sprung up in recent years.¹ Explorations of the main, western necropolis were continued, while members of the mission completed the architectural and archaeological recording of monuments found in other parts of the ancient town during rescue works carried out by the EAO.

Excavations of the necropolis concentrated in the vicinity of two separate groups of monuments: the aboveground tombs located closer to the town limits and the great underground tombs in the western end of the necropolis.

In the first group of tombs, the excavations of the oldest part of Tomb 1D were completed. The tomb belongs to the box-like category² (Fig. 1). The lower part of the tomb, which was shaped like an irregular cube, was founded on bedrock and contained three latitudinally oriented loculi. Crowning the whole structure was a massive pillar with engaged columns on each side.

¹ The Mission included: Prof. Wiktor A. Daszewski, director; Prof. Zofia Szeptyłło, Mr. Grzegorz Majcherek, Mr. Henryk Meyza, archaeologists; Mr. Błażej Małczyński, Mr. Jarosław Dobrowolski, architects; Mr. Waldemar Jerke, photographer; and Dr. Maria Kaczmarek, anthropologist. The Egyptian Antiquities Organization was represented by Mr. Ezzat el Hamahmy, the Chief Inspector from Hammam. It is to him and to Dr. Kamal Fahmy, Director General of Antiquities in the Western Delta, that we would like to express the Mission's gratitude for the help shown us throughout the season.

² W.A. Daszewski, Marina el-Alamein 1992, *PAM IV*, 1992 (1993), p. 27.

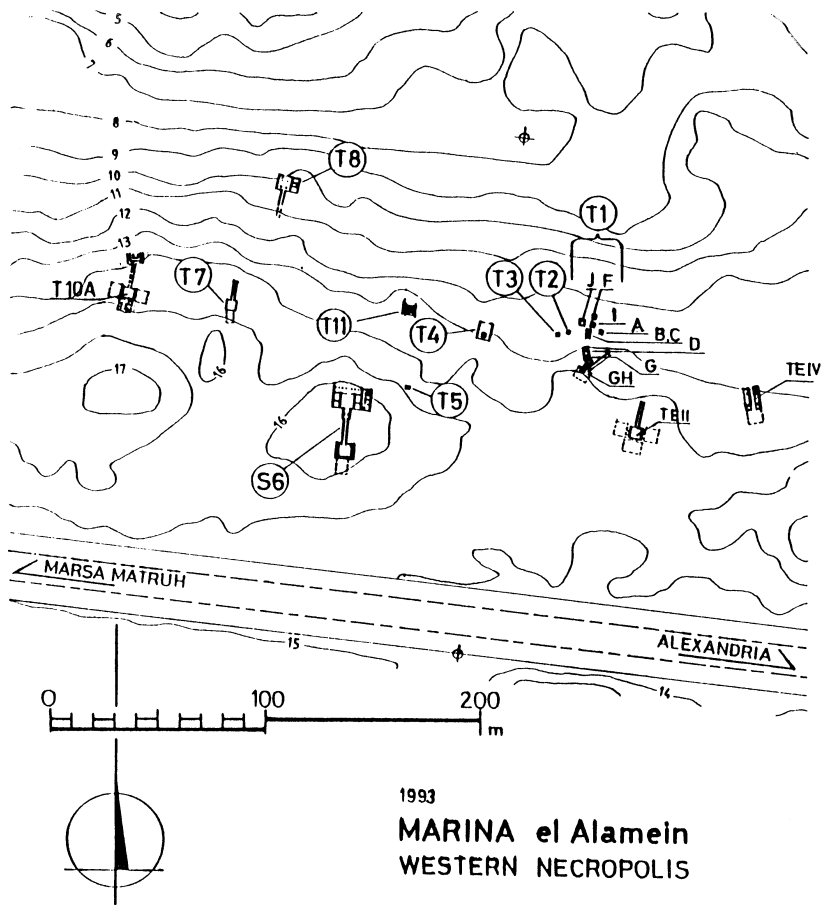


Fig. 1. Western necropolis of Marina el-Alamein after the 1993 campaign.

The southern loculus was the object of current investigation. There were 12 skeletons there in superimposed layers. Four skeletons belonged to males, two were of females and the rest were of children. The arrangement of the bodies differed. The dead were interred with heads directed either to the west or to the east. It would seem that a rational use of space available in the narrow loculus was the governing rule. The exploration of the southern loculus completed the investigations of this tomb.

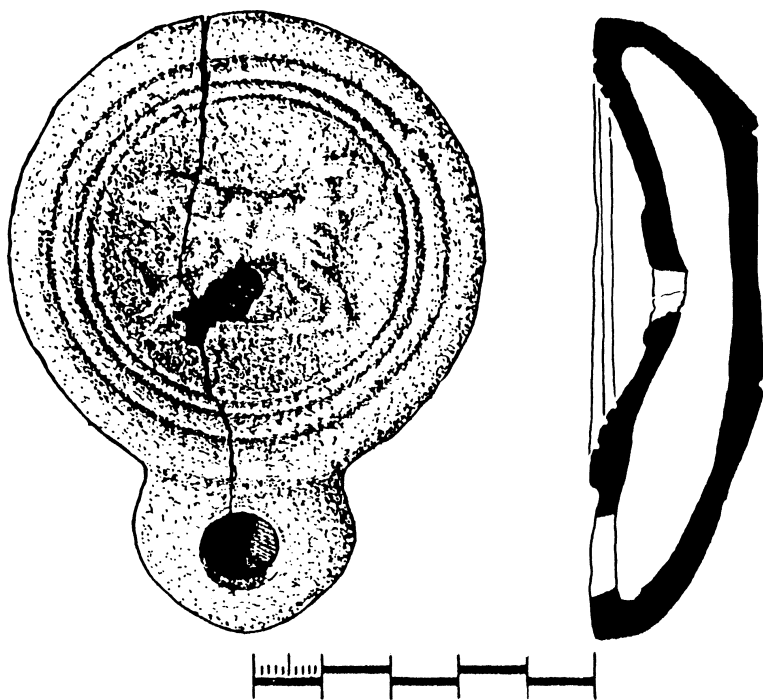
To recapitulate the findings, there were 35 skeletons interred in the three loculi of T1D: a single male, who died about 20-30, in the center loculus decorated on the outside with a relief slab representing the snake Agathodaimon,³ and in the northern loculus 22 bodies: five male, two female and 13 belonging to small children, one being an infant and one determined to be in the 14-18 age group. The tomb was most likely intended for one family and the age range would suggest that it had served two generations. The oldest was a man in the 45-55 age group, the oldest woman was 40-50 years old.

The date indicated by the few small finds, which consisted mainly of oil lamps and potsherds, is the turn of the era: the late 1st century BC and the early 1st century AD.

Yet another box-like tomb T1F is to be dated to about the same period. Here also the southern loculus was investigated and was found to contain the skeletons of two adults and two children. One of the adults was a male in the 40-50 age group. An interesting find was an oil lamp decorated with a relief representation of a dog on the discus. The clear drawing and sharp lines indicate the lamp was made in an original, new mould at

³ Id., *MDAIK* 46, 1990, Pl. 14a.

the beginning of the 1st century AD. Another lamp with identical decoration, but produced at the end of the 1st century AD from a secondary mould and using different clay, was discovered inside hypogeum T7 (Fig. 2).



*Fig. 2. Lamp of the 1st century AD from tomb T7.
Drawing B. Malczyński.*

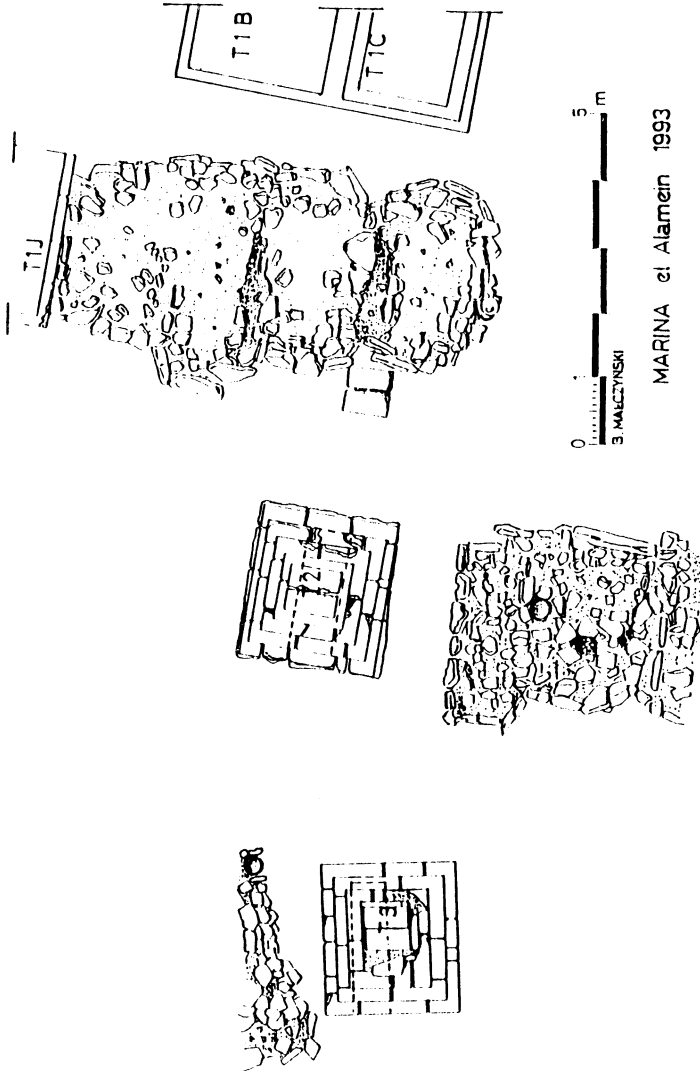


Fig. 3. Location of "mass graves". Drawing B. Malczyński.

The last of the box-like tombs investigated this season was tomb T1J which was already mentioned briefly in an earlier report.⁴ The tomb was erected over a latitudinally oriented trench cut in bedrock, containing one burial. The trench was covered with flat limestone slabs and a saddle-roof of limestone slabs. The aboveground monument took on the form of a rectangular box with two loculi placed on either side of the axis traced by the trench burial below. The center part of the box above the trench was filled with debris, earth and bits of mortar, constituting a kind of reinforced foundation for the great pillar which crowned the structure. This debris filling ran all the way up to the top of the pillar, acting as its reinforcement.⁵ The pillar was set up on a three-step podium and was crowned with a type of capital which resembles "Nabatean" capitals⁶ and is characteristic of the region. On top of this capital there was a smaller podium supporting a smaller pillar and yet another capital of the same type as above, but smaller. In the southern loculus of tomb T1J four skeletons were discovered. The three skeletons in the upper layer belonged to a man, a woman and a child. In the bottom layer a single burial of a man was found.

⁴ Id., *PAM III*, 1991 (1992), p. 32.

⁵ On the reconstruction of this tomb, see J. Dobrowolski in this volume, p. 34ff. A graphic reconstruction of this tomb was presented earlier, in *PAM III*, 1991 (1992), p. 37, Fig. 4.

⁶ Cf. W.A. Daszewski, *Nouvelles recherches sur la cote Nord de l'Egypte. Un type meconnu de chapiteaux*, *Et Trav XV*, 1990, pp. 109-124.

Tomb T1J's unique form distinguishes it from all known sepulchral monuments in Egypt, but sits well in the context of tombs discovered so far at Marina, adding yet another interesting example to the catalogue of local builders' creativity (Fig. 4).

Explorations carried out west of the stepped-pyramid tomb T2 revealed a similar monument which was designated T3. It was a four-step pyramid erected on a rectangular base (2.30 x 1.97 m) above a burial trench cut in bedrock. On top of the pyramid there was a 0.50 m high base with a cornice at the top. It presumably supported some kind of crowning element, which has not survived. The double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt carved in limestone and found nearby would favor the hypothesis that a statue of Horus in falcon form was used as the crowning element. Without the tentative sculpture at the top, the tomb was about 2.10 m high. The trench under the pyramid monument contained a single poorly preserved skeleton.

In the vicinity of tombs T2, T3 and the box-like tombs T1, T1A, T1B, T1C, T1J and T1F, yet another type of burial was discovered, as yet unknown in Marina. It was constituted of extensive stone prisms on an irregular rectangular plan with slightly rounded corners. Flat limestone slabs were set up vertically on the narrow sides next to each another, so that they formed the outside perimeter of the construction. Inside, the structure was filled with a mass of irregular stones and sand to a height of 0.60 m. The burials in the form of trenches were found inside the prisms (their exploration is planned in the coming season). The prisms, set closely together, should apparently be considered a sort of "mass grave" and designated accordingly. The dimensions of particular tombs range from 2.00-2.50 m in width and 3-4 m in length. The graves are found on the same level as the pyramid

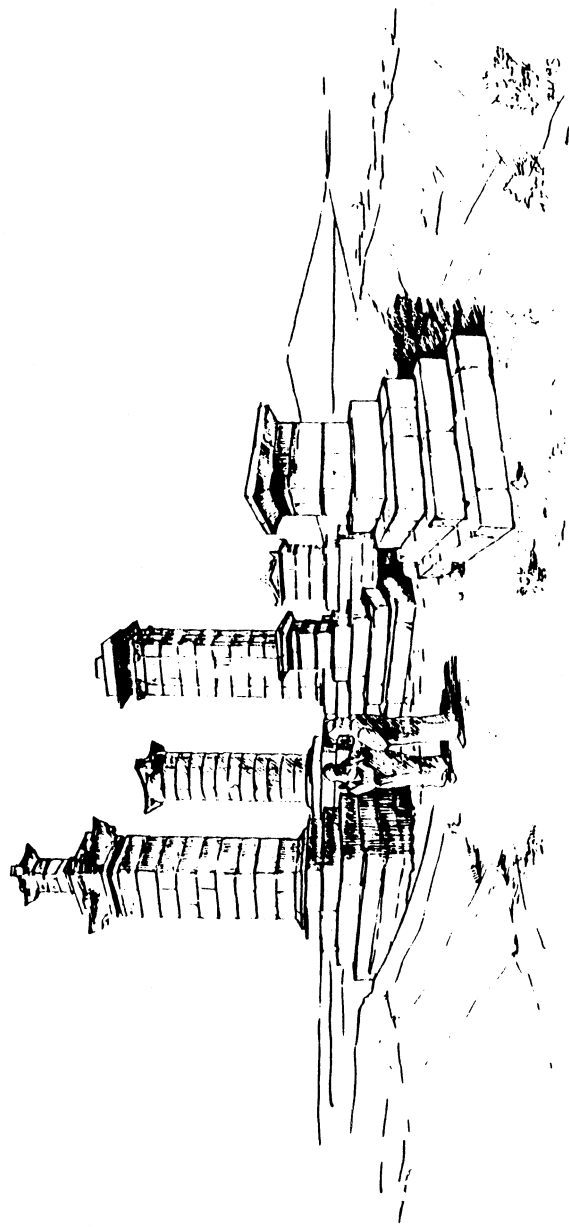


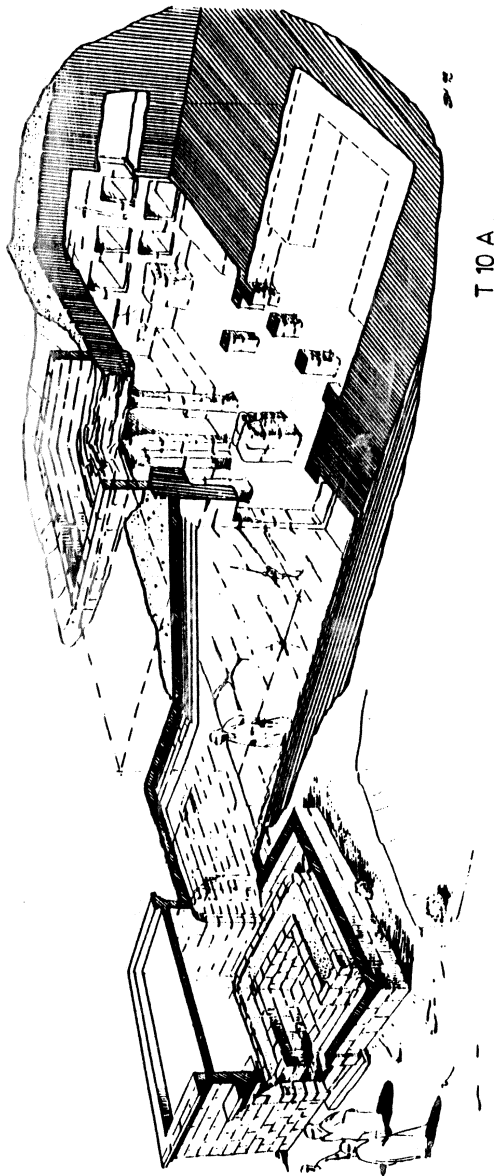
Fig. 4. Reconstruction of a group of graves T1, T1A, T1B, T1C, T1F and T1J.
Drawing B. Matczyński.

tombs and seem to have come into existence not much later. Some of them are adjacent to the box-like tombs. It is to be assumed that they are an integral part of the early necropolis. Their presence generates a number of questions of a sociological and religious nature. Are they proof of a social stratification of the community of the ancient town or an indication perhaps of the pauperization of certain families which had previously prospered sufficiently to be able to afford tombs of a more monumental form? Or are the "mass graves" a reflection of different sepulchral customs?

Explorations of the area about 50 m west of the tombs described here led to the discovery of a tomb (T11) which resembled a columbarium. The structure was presumably a large cube, possibly topped by an additional element. The upper row consisting of three loculi was partly uncovered. Below this were other loculi. The tomb was surrounded by a double wall. Further explorations are necessary to reveal more of the tomb's structure.

A separate research problem is the investigation of the monumental underground tombs. Two basic types are represented. The first is an underground structure accessible from ground level through a monumental staircase, partly cut in bedrock and partly built of masonry, leading to a courtyard also cut in the rock from where the burial chambers can be entered. The other type is a combination of an aboveground heroon-like structure and an underground tomb resembling the first type described here.

Hypogeum T7 is an example of the first type. Explorations continued to uncover the courtyard and burial chamber. Work proceeded along the main axis, i.e., on line with the steps and entrance to the chamber. In the middle of the courtyard there was an altar (0.63 x 0.87 m; 1.05 m high) with traces of ashes on



T 10 A

Fig. 5. Reconstruction of tomb T10A. Drawing B. Matczyński.

it. Two steps cut in the rock led inside the chamber whose floor sloped back slightly. The benches which ran around three walls of the chamber were also cut in bedrock. Loculi were hewn in the walls above them. The side benches were 1.50 m wide and 3.95 m long. The southern bench, that is the bench along the back wall, was definitely narrower and raised 0.70 m above the floor. In the middle of the chamber there was a small offering table in the form of a rectangular stone slab set up on a vertical support. Inside the chamber two oil lamps from the late 1st century AD were discovered (Fig. 2).

Hypogeum 10A constitutes an example of the second type.⁷ The purpose this season was to complete clearing the steps, the courtyard and at least part of the main burial chamber. As in T7, the whole underground space of this tomb was filled with drifted sand. The clearing of the monumental staircase and the corridor leading to the inside courtyard proved successful. The barrel vaulting of the staircase was excellently preserved along two thirds of its length. A section through the middle of the courtyard was cleared determining the depth of the filling (5.50 m below ground level) and uncovering the main altar cut in bedrock. It turned out that the tomb had been partly filled in with sand already in antiquity, making it necessary to introduce a stone slab in place of the altar, some 1.50 m above the original floor level. The courtyard was of the peristyle type with pillars on three sides supporting the ceiling in the entrances to the burial chambers (Fig. 5). Inside the main burial chamber which was located on the N-S axis, there was a total of 15 loculi in two rows along three sides. At the back wall there was an additional altar or offering table cut in bedrock on the long axis of the tomb. The full

⁷ See *id.*, *PAM IV*, 1992 (1993), pp. 29-30, Fig. 3.

length of hypogeum T10A, including the aboveground part, was 30 m.

Clearing work was also carried out in hypogeum T8 which belongs to the second type. The staircase of which further sections were uncovered is severely damaged. To judge by the discovered structural elements, it must have been covered with a flat roof, similar to that found in T7. Hypogeum T8 should be considered among the largest structures of the type. The aboveground part and staircase discovered so far has a total length of 28 m; the length of the inner courtyard and burial chamber, when cleared, will have to be added to this.

Recapitulating this season's discoveries, one has to observe the rich variety of burial structures discovered on the western necropolis of the ancient town. Beside the two types of hypogea:

- 1) without an aboveground part, and
- 2) with a separate underground and aboveground part, there are several types of tombs of smaller size, namely:
 - a) trench tombs covered with flat slabs;
 - b) trench tombs with an aboveground monument in the form of a stepped pyramid;
 - c) box-like tombs topped by different kinds of sepulchral monuments: columns, pillars, sarcophagi etc.;
 - d) box-like tombs inside a temenos (T4);⁸
 - e) a columbarium (T11) with a number of rows of loculi one above the other and topped by some kind of sepulchral monument;

⁸ See *id.*, *MDA1K* 46, 1990, pl. 15h.

- f) "mass graves" in the form of great prisms of stones laid above trenches hewn in bedrock;
- g) "a tempietto" tombs (T5)⁹ in the form of a trapezoid structure over 2 m high with a sloping roof.

⁹ Ibid., pl. 16a, b.