

Ειδική Ενότητα

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Special Section

FUNERARY ART IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN:  
THE HELLENISTIC NECROPOLEIS OF ALEXANDRIA

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# Shatby and Mostapha Kamel

## Two 3rd century BCE Cemeteries, Two Phases of Funerary Art in Alexandria

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Mona Haggag

Affiliation

hendalius@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8990-8776

### ABSTRACT

*Much of Alexandria's ancient architecture, both civic and funerary, has not survived the passage of time. A considerable portion of its funerary monuments was lost even after being recorded by 19th- and 20th-century explorers. Today, only a small fraction remains. Yet, these surviving structures, along with early reports and drawings of now-vanished tombs, provide invaluable insights into the funerary landscape of ancient Alexandria. While scholars have not reached a consensus on the dating of many tombs –whether extant or lost– there is broad agreement that the Shatby cemetery constitutes the city's earliest burial ground, followed chronologically by the Mustafa Kamel cemetery. This paper examines how both cemeteries influenced later Alexandrian funerary architecture in terms of layout and decoration. It also highlights distinctive innovations introduced by early Alexandrian architects, particularly in tombs commissioned by the upper classes – features that reflect a localized and evolving architectural identity.*

Since its foundation, Alexandria has undergone cycles of prosperity and decline; yet it has continuously endured as a living urban organism. Over the centuries, much of its material heritage, both civic and funerary, has either vanished, been subsumed into later constructions, or deteriorated beyond recognition. Among the most substantial remains are its funerary complexes, which survive in greater numbers than other categories of ancient architecture. These structures offer not only a window into ancient death rituals and funerary customs but also, by extension, into the social identities and lived experiences of the city's inhabitants.

In antiquity, Alexandria was flanked by two major cemeteries, situated to the east and west of the city's formal limits. The western necropolis was an extensive complex, featuring embalming facilities, ritual areas, and landscaped gardens. It was described by the geographer Strabo in the 1st century BCE as a "City of the Dead" (*Geography* 17.1.10). By contrast, the eastern necropolis experienced steady encroachment as the city expanded eastward; in time, residential development fragmented what had once been a contiguous funerary landscape. Based on current chronological frameworks, it is widely accepted that the eastern necropolis is earlier, containing the burials of those who died soon after Alexandria's foundation.

A combination of natural degradation and intensive urban development has led to the widespread destruction of Alexandria's necropoleis. Many tombs uncovered during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were subsequently lost to modern expansion, particularly during the rapid urbanization of the 20th century.<sup>1</sup> A notable

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1 Neroutsos was the first to investigate the tombs of Hadra necropolis: Neroutsos 1875, 17–23; 1888, 110–16. Hogarth excavated a

example is the Hadra cemetery, situated southeast of the ancient city, which was destroyed to accommodate the Cairo – Rosetta railway. One of its loculus chambers, documented by Evaristo Breccia, was relocated to the Shatby site. Excavation records describe the cemetery as comprising subterranean chambers with *kline*-style sarcophagi and rows of loculi, some with corridors extending 20 to 40 meters to allow for successive interments. Numerous artifacts from Hadra, such as Tanagra figurines and Hadra hydriai, are now housed in the Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria and date to the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BCE.

The tomb of Sidi Gaber Thiersch, located near the Cleopatra district along the seashore, met a similar fate, having been submerged due to rising sea levels (Thiersch 1904, 1–6, pls. I–III). This tomb comprised a courtyard, a burial unit with a *kline* chamber and anteroom, and a *loculus* room, and is dated to the late 3rd or early 2nd century BCE (Adriani 1966, 140). In the Ibrahimia district, additional tombs belonging to soldiers or mercenaries (3rd century BCE, Brown 1957, 4–23) and a Jewish tomb were likewise destroyed. Modern development also resulted in the complete dismantling of the El-Abd cemetery, situated along the seashore in Ibrahimia, along with the adjacent El-Haddad tomb. The El-Abd cemetery, recently rediscovered through rescue excavations by the Supreme Council of Antiquities, consisted of extensive *hypogea* with *klinai* and *loculus* chambers spanning from the early Ptolemaic period to the early Byzantine era. The El-Haddad tomb, a single *hypogeum*, likely dates to the 2nd or 1st century BCE, though neither site has yet been formally published.

Another notable example is the Antoniades tomb, located within the gardens of Sir John Antoniades. Despite its significance, the tomb has long suffered from neglect and is now largely filled with modern debris. Although dated to the late Ptolemaic period (end of the 1st century BCE), it retains an architectural layout of earlier Alexandrian tombs. The complex consists of a square courtyard, a large anteroom, and a shallow burial chamber with rows of *loculi* and a decorative *kline* in relief on the front wall. Additional burial chambers flank the courtyard to the north and south (Thiersch 1904, 6; Adriani 1966, 143–144, no. 90).

The Ceccaldi tomb, once located on the promontory west of Stanley Bay, has since vanished. It was named after its discoverer, who initially misidentified it as a temple dedicated to Venus-Arsinoe. In fact, it was a *hypogeum* with a peristyle courtyard, dated to the 3rd century BCE (Ceccaldi 1896, 268–72).

Today, only two sites from the eastern necropolis remain visible and accessible: the cemeteries of Shatby and Mostafa Kamel. These surviving complexes offer critical testimony to the scale and character of what was once a vast and architecturally rich Alexandrian burial landscape.

When it comes to the western necropolis, the case is not much different. The recently uncovered Gabbari cemetery, part of the western burial grounds in use from the Ptolemaic through the Roman periods, was dismantled to make way for the construction of the Gabbari bridge (Empereur and Nenna 2001, 2003). Several tombs in the Souq El-Wardian (Mafrousa) area, dating to the 2nd century BCE (Breccia 1907, 63–74), now lie within privately owned or corporate properties and are no longer accessible. Other individual tombs from the Gabbari area have been completely dismantled, including the 1st century BCE Girgis tomb (Adriani 1966, 160–61, no. 116), the Roman-period Habashi tomb (Habachi 1937, 270–85), the 1st century BCE Fort Saleh tomb I (Breccia 1932, 32–7), the Fort Saleh Riad Tomb, a Late Ptolemaic *hypogeum* discovered by Henri Riad and mentioned by Adriani (Adriani 1966, 264–65, fig. Zb) and the Fort Saleh *triclinium* tomb, discovered by Botti and drawn by Adriani (Adriani 1966, 154, no. 100 bis). The same fate befell the Wardian tombs, confusingly referred to by Adriani as the Mina El-Bassal tombs (Adriani 1956a, 17–33).

The only accessible cemeteries of the western necropolis that remain intact date to the Roman period. Chief among them are the catacombs of Kom El-Shokafa (Botti 1902a, 6–12), which include the Tigran Pasha tomb (Adriani 1956b, 62–86) that was originally hewn from the rock in the eastern necropolis and later relocated to

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limited part one decade later: Hogarth and Benson 1894–1895, 13–7. Breccia (1912–1920) carried out extensive excavations in the area of El-Moassat looking at Street L2' in El-Falaki map: Breccia 1913, 15–33; 1930, 99–132; 1931–1932, 9–21. Adriani continued further to the southeast in Ezbet Makhoulouf area looking at the street L3' and in the area of El-Manara modern cemetery situated directly to the south side of the main Canopic Street (L1): Adriani 1934, 28–32; 1940, 65–122; 1952c, 1–27.

this site. Two additional burial chambers have been transferred to the gardens of Kom El-Shokafa: one from Wardian, a triclinium chamber discovered by Breccia (1912a, 4–15; formerly GRM 20986), and another from Gabbari, the so-called Stagni tomb (Venit 1999, 641–69). The Saqia tomb, also from Wardian, is now exhibited in the Graeco-Roman Museum (GRM 27029 & 27030). This *hypogeum* includes a courtyard and a burial chamber with two *klinai*. Its painted decoration featuring a *saqia* (a mechanical water-lifting device) and rural scenes, is highly distinctive. Although the date of the tomb remains debated, its layout and architectural features suggest a Ptolemaic origin (Riad 1964, 169–72).

The Grand Catacomb of Wardian also survives. This large early Roman hypogeum is notable for its circular central chamber, from which three *triclinia* extend radially (Adriani 1966, 162–71, no. 118). The site has since been absorbed into the area of the harbor warehouses, limiting public access. Meanwhile, ongoing excavations by the Supreme Council of Antiquities in the Gabal El-Zaytoon district of Gabbari have brought to light a series of Hellenistic and Roman tombs. These include subterranean, multi-chambered complexes, some featuring *klinai* dating from the Ptolemaic period.

The necropolis on Pharos Island comprised two principal cemeteries: Anfoushy and Ras El-Tin. Of these, only the Anfoushy tombs, to the west of Anfoushy Bay, remain partially extant, though in a deteriorated state. Dated to the second half of the 2nd century BCE, the complex originally included six tombs. Of these, the third and fourth are heavily damaged, while the sixth has been entirely lost. Tomb I at Anfoushy features a courtyard, two burial units each consisting of a large anteroom and a main chamber and three ancillary rooms intended for ritual use. The courtyard is constructed along the southeast and northwest sides, while the remaining walls are rock-cut and decorated with painted ornamentation (Botti 1902b, 13–5; 1902c, 6–36; Breccia 1914a, 111–20; 1921, 55–69; Adriani 1952a, 56; 1952b, 48–54). The Ras El-Tin tombs, now located within the grounds of the Ras El-Tin Palace, are currently inaccessible to visitors.

The pioneering excavators of these cemeteries meticulously documented their discoveries through detailed drawings and architectural reconstructions. These visual records have significantly enriched our understanding of Alexandrian funerary monuments and continue to offer critical insights into the development of their architectural forms and decorative programmes.

Although scholarly consensus on the precise dating of Alexandria's Hellenistic cemeteries remains elusive, it is widely accepted that the Shatby pit tombs and Hypogeum A represent the city's earliest burial structures. Located northeast of the ancient city limits along the seashore, the Shatby cemetery has suffered extensive losses. Most of its original tombs –both surface-level pit graves and subterranean hypogea– have disappeared. The current cemetery site spans approximately 3,618 square meters and once featured numerous shallow pit tombs, marked by a variety of grave monuments including stepped rectangular towers, altars, and earthen mounds. At the time of discovery, many such markers were recorded (Breccia 1905, IV; 1912b, I–XXXII), but today, only nine stepped towers remain.

Shatby was originally excavated by Evaristo Breccia between 1904 and 1910. More recently, a comprehensive project was undertaken between 2021 and 2023 to restore, conserve, and develop a site management plan for the cemetery. This initiative was led by the Archaeological Society of Alexandria in collaboration with the Cyprus Institute and with research consultancy provided by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and was funded by the A.G. Leventis Foundation (*Alexandrian Necropolis* 2024). The new investigations uncovered previously unknown sections of the cemetery and led to the production of a revised site plan (Fig. 1). These findings have deepened our understanding of the site's layout and features, supporting the interpretation that Shatby served as a prototype for the planning and decoration of later Alexandrian funerary complexes.

From the last quarter of the 4th century BCE, Alexandrians began to inter their dead at the Shatby cemetery. Surface pit tombs from this early phase have yielded funerary material datable to that period. These initial burials appear to have prompted the need to expand the site's capacity through the excavation of subterranean complexes carved into the bedrock. Designed to accommodate funerary cult and ritual activity, these *hypogea* marked a significant transition in burial practice. The emergence of multi-chambered rock-cut tombs

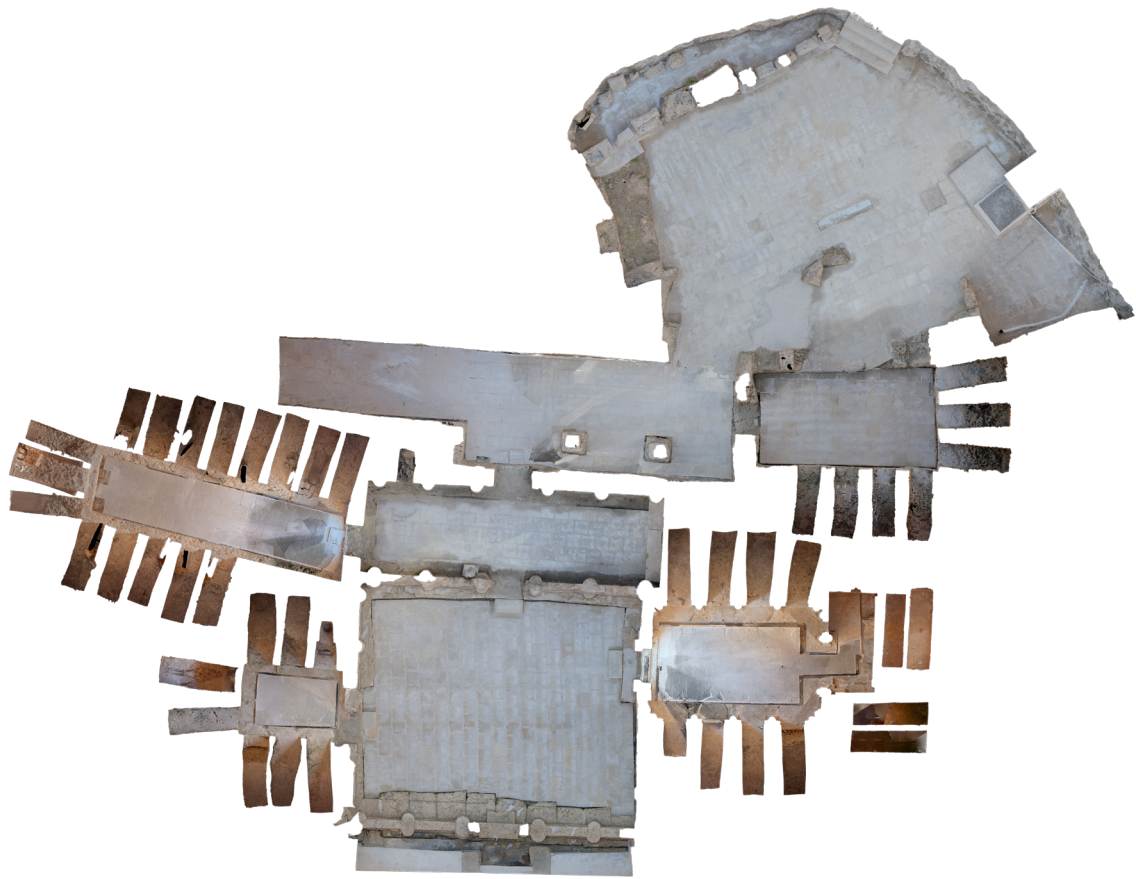


Fig. 1. The new plan of Hypogeum A after the discovery of the south entrance. © The Archaeological Society of Alexandria.

responded to the social and commemorative needs of Alexandria's upper classes, who sought to preserve their memory and affirm their status through monumental burial. These tombs typically housed multiple burial chambers, likely intended for families or members of specific social or professional associations.

The iconography and inscriptions found on tombstones from the Shatby and Hadra cemeteries attest to the diverse origins of those buried there. Many of the deceased had migrated to Alexandria from various regions of the Greek world, including mainland Greece, Asia Minor, and North Africa. What united them, however, was their membership in Alexandria's upper social strata and their integration into the city's elite networks. While their tombs reflect distinctly Alexandrian architectural and decorative forms, they also convey a strong sense of cultural pride in their Hellenic origins. This cultural identity was articulated not only through iconography and epigraphy, but also through the funerary rituals performed by family and community members, rituals whose importance is underscored by the spatial design and ornamentation of the tombs themselves.

Following its designation as the capital of Egypt in 305/4 BCE, Alexandria experienced rapid demographic growth and an influx of new settlers. This expansion necessitated the extension of the city's eastern boundary, the most viable direction for urban development. As a result, the Shatby cemetery, originally situated at the city's eastern fringe, was gradually abandoned, giving way to new burial grounds further east, including those at Ibrahimia, El-Abd, Sidi Gaber, and most notably, the Mostafa Kamel cemetery, which became the most densely developed. Chronologically following Shatby, the Mostafa Kamel cemetery adheres to the same fundamental layout: rock-cut chambers arranged around an open courtyard designed to facilitate funerary ritual. This configuration emerged as the architectural standard for elite tombs in Alexandria, defining what is now referred to as the "monumental tomb" type.

The principal cemetery at Shatby comprises three complexes of subterranean chamber tombs, each intricately hewn into the bedrock and featuring barrel-vaulted ceilings. A defining architectural element across all three hypogea is the open courtyard (*aule*), which, despite variations in size and layout, serves as the focal point of each complex. Among them, Hypogaeum A is the earliest, most expansive, and most elaborately decorated. It opens with an *aule* bordered by attached Doric semi-columns, creating a pseudo-peristyle effect. Around this central court, burial chambers are symmetrically carved into the eastern, western, and northern sides.

Hypogaeum B, located northwest of Hypogaeum A, is slightly later in date and more compact in scale.<sup>2</sup> It consists of a small central courtyard, flanked on the east by a chamber with a built bench and on the west by a burial room featuring loculi arranged in superimposed rows. These *loculi*—rectangular recesses cut horizontally into the walls—were designed to accommodate one or more bodies or cinerary urns. They were typically sealed with slabs, which were often painted or sculpted with imagery related to the deceased or the afterlife. Some slabs bear inscriptions identifying the dead, occasionally accompanied by brief epitaphs. Once sealed with stucco, the *loculi* were intended to remain permanently closed. The complexes at Shatby provide some of the earliest known examples of this burial form in Alexandria, which would later become the dominant mode of interment across Egypt and other Hellenistic centers.

Hypogaeum C, located west of Hypogaeum A, was excavated between 2012 and 2013 by the German mission from Augsburg University (Schmidt and Rummel 2015, 49–67; Rummel and Schmidt 2019, 54–66). Access to the tomb is provided via two staircases descending to a central courtyard. Doorways on the northern and western sides of the court were intended to lead into additional chambers likely a burial chamber and a visitors' room. However, excavation of these doorways was abruptly halted at a certain depth, and construction of the complex was deliberately abandoned. As a result, Hypogaeum C remains in an unfinished state and appears never to have been completed.

Alexandria's multi-chambered tombs typically combine two architectural ground plans. The first is the so-called "oikos type," in which rooms are arranged sequentially along a linear axis, one opening into the next. This layout, inspired by Macedonian funerary and domestic architecture, is exemplified by the eastern burial unit at Shatby (Fig. 2) (Pagenstecher and Sieglin 1919, 112–25). The second, often integrated into the same complex, involves the distribution of burial chambers around a central open court, a feature also prominent at Shatby. Together, these two design principles define the characteristic spatial logic of early Alexandrian monumental tombs. As at Shatby, courtyards were a central architectural feature in nearly all Hellenistic multi-chambered tombs. These courts took one of three primary forms: a true peristyle, with free-standing columns surrounding the space; a pseudo-peristyle, where columns are engaged with the surrounding walls; or a plain, unadorned court. Typically combined with the oikos-type plan, these tombs featured spacious anterooms often larger than the burial chambers themselves. Loculi were frequently incorporated into these architectural settings, either as part of the original design or added later as burial needs evolved.

Mostafa Kamel necropolis was discovered in the 1930s by Achille Adriani (1936). Of the original seven tombs,<sup>3</sup> only four complexes survive today; the others have been lost. They follow the Alexandrian type of funerary architecture with the same plan that combines the *oikos* with the *peristyle*, as well as using *loculi* side by side the *klinai*. The altar formed an integral part of the courts' layout. The anterooms are usually larger than the burial chambers they lead to.

The courtyard of Mostafa Kamel Tomb I (Fig. 3) is a pseudo-peristyle surmounted by an attic, a feature inspired by Macedonian designs. The tomb includes three *kline* rooms and two additional chambers likely

2 Excavated by Breccia (1912b) between 1910–1913, it was re-excavated by the mission of Augsburg University headed by Stefan Schmidt and Christof Rummel, who documented its plan for the first time. Schmidt and Rummel 2015, 49–67; Rummel and Schmidt 2019, 45–54.

3 The tombs are oriented south-north, beginning with tomb I and II beside each other, tombs III–VII lie successively to the north. Tombs V–VII have completely vanished.



Fig. 2. The eastern burial unit of Shatby Hypogeum A. © The Archaeological Society of Alexandria.

intended for ritual use.<sup>4</sup> The court of Tomb II has only two freestanding columns in antis on the southern side, supporting a Doric frieze and a cornice that runs around the other sides (Fig. 4). Tomb III follows an axial planning but places a large central court at its core, connecting the flanking rooms. The north side is dominated by a high platform with a theater stage design (*proskenion*), fronted by a façade of six engaged Doric columns supporting an architrave, frieze, and cornice (Fig. 5). Three doors are positioned within the central intercolumniations, while the lateral spaces feature false doors, a decorative motif characteristic of Alexandrian tombs. This dramatic architectural composition functions as an anteroom to the *kline* chamber. The southern side of the court opens at a semi-circular unit composed of a room and an *exedra*. Although much of Tomb IV has been lost, particularly its northern section, likely containing the *kline* chamber, the nearly square courtyard remains. It is a true peristyle, with free-standing Doric columns arranged in pairs between the corner angles on all four sides. Tombs V and VI have been destroyed, but Adriani's plans (1936, pl. XXXV) show them each with small courtyards. Tomb VII consisted only of a pit grave.

In 1983, rescue excavations led by Ahmed Abd El-Fattah, uncovered another tomb complex, Tomb VIII (Leclant and Clerc 1985, 339). In 1994 more rescue trenches were dug by M. Rodziewicz, and in 2003 a mission of Palermo University headed by Nicola Bonacasa carried out archaeological, topographical and GPR pilot surveys at the site. Excavation of this tomb has never been completed (Adriani 2000, pls. XXV, XXVI; Bonacasa and Minà 2015, 155–75). The tomb is situated southwest of Tomb II and dates back to the middle of the 3rd century BCE. It seems to be the largest and most elaborate of all other tombs in Mostafa Kamel, hence called “the Great Peristyle Tomb”. The uncovered section of the tomb features a pseudo peristyle court with a Doric hexastyle façade leading to the other architectural units.

4 There is no consensus among specialists on a specific date for the tombs of the Mostafa Kamel necropolis, including the excavator himself. Adriani 1936, 173–74; 1966, 133; 1972, 116–17. However, Venit discussed the different opinions and, by comparing the evidence, concluded that tombs 1 and 3 date to the first half of the third century BCE, three or four decades after Hypogeum A at Shatby. Tomb 2 dates to the second half of the same century: Venit 2002, 45, 51 and notes.



Fig. 3. The court of Mostafa Kamel Tomb I. © M. Haggag.



Fig. 4. The court of Mostafa Kamel Tomb II. © M. Haggag.



Fig. 5. The anteroom leading to the north *kline* chamber in Mostafa Kamel Tomb III, designed in imitation of a theater stage with a hexastyle Doric façade. © M. Haggag.

Visiting the tomb was a meaningful ritual act for the family and friends of the deceased. Funerary banquets and commemorative rites were often conducted within the tomb complex, necessitating architectural spaces that accommodated the living as well as the dead. The open court, adapted from Hellenistic domestic architecture, was central to this design. It allowed natural light and air to circulate through the complex and helped disperse the smoke and vapors from sacrifices and meals. These courtyards were typically equipped with a water source and one or more altars for ritual use. Their walls were often decorated with vivid painted designs or stucco reliefs that imitated masonry or architectural motifs in illusionistic fashion. In the tombs of Mostafa Kamel, the color palette and decorative schemes closely parallel those found at Shatby, reflecting a shared visual language and symbolic intent.

At Shatby, the southern wall of the courtyard is constructed from masonry blocks, likely quarried and shaped from the surrounding bedrock (Fig. 6). This construction technique recurs in several other Alexandrian tombs, including Tombs II, III, and IV at the Mostafa Kamel cemetery, as well as in the courtyard of Anfoushy Tomb I.

False windows and doors held particular symbolic significance in early Alexandrian funerary architecture. Shatby provides the earliest known examples of these elements. In Hypogeum A, for instance, a false window remains visible in the western part of the northern wall of the north corridor – an area decorated in the same illusionistic style as the *aule* itself.<sup>5</sup> False doors, in particular, became a recurring motif in Alexandrian tombs, whether painted or carved in relief, as seen in Mostafa Kamel Tomb III (see Fig. 5). The same motif was also frequently employed in the design of loculus sealing slabs.

<sup>5</sup> False windows are also a Macedonian inspiration, examples of which are attested in the façades of Euridice's tomb which is the earliest, the great tomb and the tomb of the judgement in Lefkadia, Haddad 2018, 2\_32, fig. 2 a\_b; Gortzelany 2019, fig. 31.



Fig. 6. The southern wall of the court of Hypogeum A in Shatby, constructed with blocks cut from the mother rock. © The Archaeological Society of Alexandria.

The Doric order predominates in the architectural design of early Alexandrian tombs particularly at Shatby and Mostafa Kamel. The Ionic order is also attested, notably in the eastern burial unit of Shatby (see Fig. 2). A loculus sealing slab from Shatby (GRM 17886) found in the northwestern burial chamber known as the Philoteknos Hall, is decorated with a false door that intriguingly combines Doric elements with Corinthian capitals on the antae. The Corinthian order appears again in Mostafa Kamel Tomb I, where the anta capital at the entrance to one of the *kline* chambers is rendered in Corinthian style (Fig. 7).

In the courtyard of Mostafa Kamel tomb I the architect employed an unusually refined interpretation of the Doric order (Fig. 8). The columns are tall and slender, resulting in wide intercolumniations. On the north and south sides of the frieze, each span between columns contains three triglyphs with wide *viae* occupied by square metopes. In contrast, the east and west friezes contain only two triglyphs per intercolumniation, with narrower *viae* and rectangular metopes, an arrangement not previously attested in Doric design. This deviation appears to have been a practical solution to accommodate passageways to rooms located behind the eastern and western sides of the court. It seems that in the Alexandrian architecture, there was no contradiction between the utility and functionality of the building and the beauty of its external appearance.

The eastern burial unit of Shatby Hypogeum A contains a spacious rectangular anteroom, with four large loculi carved into each of its long walls (see Fig. 2). These walls are articulated by five Ionic semi-columns with Attic bases and low capitals, supporting an architrave surmounted by a dentil frieze. In this room, the Alexandrian carvers deviated from the typical Greek architectural practice of having a single column in the corner; instead, they placed two columns at the corners (Fig. 9), and the reason for doing this is yet unknown. If we assume that the architect was trying to achieve more solid corners in the rock-cut tomb, especially in such a weak mother rock, such an assumption is challenged by the appearance of a similar feature in the northwestern corner of the open court (Fig. 10). However, the south-west corner of the *aule* has a quarter column instead of the half columns in the other corners. A similar arrangement, that is two quarter-columns conjoined, appears in the corners of the court in Mostafa Kamel Tomb I (see Fig. 3), suggesting that this treatment may have



Fig. 7. The Corinthian capital of the anta of the entrance to the *kline* chamber in Mostafa Kamel Tomb I. © M. Haggag.



Fig. 8. The arrangement of the Doric frieze in the court of Mostafa Kamel Tomb I. © M. Haggag.

evolved into a distinctive Alexandrian motif: the so-called “heart-shaped” column, characteristic of Hellenistic architectural vocabulary in the city.



Fig. 9. The double columns in the corners of the anteroom of the eastern burial unit of Shatby. © The Archaeological Society of Alexandria.

From temple design, Macedonian tombs inspired the elaborate façades for the burial chambers, usually tetrastyle Doric or Ionic. A defining feature of these façades is the central doorway flanked by false windows. At Shatby, the rear wall of the anteroom features a façade with a large entrance flanked by a pair of Ionic semi-columns decorating the two lateral walls (see Fig. 9). In the two intercolumniations are false windows; the one to the south is closed by two shutters, while the other lacks them. The columns flanking the entrance support an entablature with an architrave, a dental frieze and a triangular pediment adorned with a relief of a Macedonian shield in the center of the tympanum.<sup>6</sup> Such elaborate entrances for an internal unit inside the tomb are evident in Macedonian funerary architecture. It appears in the royal tombs of Vergina and other elite burials elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> On the opposite wall of the chamber, a similarly ornate exit façade appears, this time with two Ionic columns, an architrave of three fasciae, a dentil frieze, and a cornice with *cymation* moulding (Fig. 11).

The anteroom of Shatby Hypogeum A leads to a smaller chamber that houses two double sarcophagi sculpted in the form of banqueting couches (*klinai*) (Fig. 12), reminiscent of those found in the dining halls of elite Greek and Macedonian households. Such double *klinai* are exceedingly rare in Alexandrian funerary contexts and are otherwise only attested at the Gabal El-Zaytoun cemetery. At Shatby, the two *klinai* are arranged in a Γ-shaped configuration, another unusual feature.<sup>8</sup> Each bears three carved pillows on both sides, evoking the luxurious lifestyle described by Athenaeus (6.255e), who notes a youth reclining with three pillows beneath his head and

6 The Macedonian shield appears to have been repeatedly represented as we find it adorning a tympanum of one of the *loculi* slabs from Shatby with illusionistic façades (GRM 17486).

7 The earliest Macedonian tomb to have such a feature is that of Euridike at Vergina, dated 430 BCE, in addition to tombs II, III and that of Rhomaios at Vergina, other examples are found in the tombs of Soteriades at Dion, the tomb of the judgment at Lefkadia and the tomb of Agios Athanasios; Gortzelany 2019, 47–76.

8 Attested in a very few examples such as in Stavroupouli in Macedon and Midas in Phrygia.



Fig. 10. The double columns in the northwestern corner of the open court of Shatby *hypogeum* A. © The Archaeological Society of Alexandria.



Fig. 11. The Ionic architectural décor of the exit of the *kliné* chamber in the eastern burial unit of Shatby. © The Archaeological Society of Alexandria.

two under his feet. In Alexandrian contexts, no other *klinai* with three pillows have been recorded; known examples typically feature only one or two.



Fig. 12. The double kline sarcophagi of the eastern burial unit in Shatby hypogeum A. © The Archaeological Society of Alexandria.

The *klinai* in Shatby are also accompanied by carved grave stelae (see Fig. 12), a feature otherwise unattested in Alexandria except in a Roman-period tomb excavated by Breccia in 1914. Known as the Ramleh Sporting Club Tomb and located between Sporting and Cleopatra along Tramway Street, this tomb reportedly included three sarcophagi, the central one bearing a stela carved as a temple façade with a triangular pediment (Breccia 1914b, 53–6). No images or drawings survive, likely due to the disruption of World War I. Aside from this exception, no other examples of sculpted stelae integrated into Alexandrian sarcophagi are currently known.

The *klinai* at Shatby rest on a 20 cm high base (see Fig. 9), a feature also observed in the Sidi Gaber Thiersch Tomb and Ras El-Tin Tomb VIII. In other Alexandrian tombs, such as Mostafa Kamel II, Anfoushy II, and the Antoniadès tomb, the floor of the *kline* chamber is elevated above the preceding anteroom, and in some cases, the *kline* is sculpted in relief. While the *prothesis* (the ritual laying out of the body) was originally conducted outdoors in Greece until Solon's reforms, Lucian (*On Funerals* 12) describes this rite as occurring inside tombs in Alexandria. The visibility of the *kline* from the *aule* in Hypogeum A suggests it served this very function, allowing mourners a final view of the deceased during the funerary rites.

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