

# UNPUBLISHED GROUP RELIEFS [PORTRAIT STELAE AND GRAVE SCULPTURE] AT THE ASHMOUNIN STOREHOUSE IN MINYA

By

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## ABSTRACT

[AR] مجموعة غير منشورة للنفوس البارزة (لوحات جنائزية وشواهد قبور) بمخزن الأشمونين المتحفى بالمنيا تتناول هذه الدراسة خمسة نماذج لشواهد قبور ولوحات جنائزية لم تنشر من قبل، ومحفوظة في مخزن الأشمونين المتحفى بالمنيا، وغير معلوم مصدرها، اثنان منهم على هيئة تماثيل بداخل ناووس أو مشكاة، وثلاثة عبارة عن تماثيل جنائزية مستقلة. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقديم دراسة وصفية لهذه الشواهد واللوحات الجنائزية، تتبع بدراسة تحليلية مقارنة تتناول فيها مادة النحت، وتقديم رؤية واضحة للسمات الفنية لمعالجة تصوير هذه المجموعة، والأسلوب الفني المتبع في تنفيذ تماثيل المتوفين، والمتمثل في ملامح الوجه والزى والوقوفه أضف إلى ذلك الكشف عن ماهية ومكانة أصحاب التماثيل، والرموز التي صورت معهم، والغرض منها. كما يعكس موضوع الدراسة صورة واضحة عن المدرسة الفنية التي أنتجت هذه المجموعة، لذا تأتي أهمية هذه الدراسة لتحديد مكان العثور عليها، ووضع تأريخ لها استناداً على كل هذه العناصر السابقة. يتضح من خلال الدراسة أن شواهد القبور، واللوحات الجنائزية مُنفذة من مواد محلية، ومصورة على الطراز الروماني، ومتأثرة بالروح والأساليب الهلنستية، كما أنها تنتمي إلى طبقة النخبة في المجتمع المصري خلال العصر الروماني، واتضح أيضاً أنها منحوتة بجودة عالية، وخلص إلى أن شواهد القبور الجنائزية موضوع الدراسة تعود إلى العصر الروماني، خاصة في الفترة الممتدة من القرن الثاني إلى بداية القرن الرابع الميلادي. أيضاً تعكس الرموز المصاحبة للتماثيل الجنائزية مدى ارتباطهم بالطقوس الجنائزية، واعتقادهم في الخلود والحماية والحياة الأبدية.

[EN] This study deals with five models of funeral tombstones and statues that have not been published before and are kept in the Ashmounin storehouse in Minya. Their origins are unknown. Two of them are statues inside a niche, and three of them are individual funerary statues. And provides a descriptive study of these funerary grave sculptures and statues, followed by a comparative analytical study dealing with sculpture. One goal is to provide a clear vision of artistic features. Another goal is to address the depiction of this group and its artistic style seen in its facial features, costume, and posture. Additionally, this study hopes to find the identity and status of the owners of the figurines, the symbols depicted with them, and their purpose. The subject of the study reflects a clear picture of the art school that produced the statues. The importance of this study is to determine where the statue group was found and to date it. The tombstones and funerary statues are made of local material, and depicted in the Roman style, which was influenced by the Hellenistic spirit and styles. The high quality of the carving makes it evident that the statues belonged to the elite class in Roman Egypt. The iconography included in the funerary statues reflects their connection with funeral rituals, and their belief in immortality, protection, and eternal life.

**KEYWORDS:** Ashmounin Storehouse, funerary statues, funeral Wreath, pine cone, grave sculpture, the hieroglyphic sign «sa».

## I. INTRODUCTION

Ancient Egyptian afterlife beliefs included those of Greek, Roman, and earlier pharaonic cultures. Grave sculptures marked the transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead, as they were used to determine the place where offerings were left and where funeral rituals, which guided the deceased's soul to his burial place<sup>1</sup>, were performed. Therefore, funeral grave sculptures are the key to knowing the culture and world of the deceased outside the cemetery<sup>2</sup>, as they reflect the funerary concepts and rituals that prevailed in society during the Ptolemaic and Roman eras in Egypt.

The ancient Egyptian carved a statue for himself and put it in his tomb because he believed that his soul would return to him again in the cemetery. The deceased's soul, or (Ba), must recognize them from their statue. Hence, funerary statues and portrait stelae immortalize the memory of the deceased and his desire to receive offerings and enjoy the protection of idols in the other world<sup>3</sup>.

This study deals with five unpublished grave sculptures, which are preserved in the Ashmounin<sup>4</sup> storehouse in Minya. Their provenances are unknown<sup>5</sup>. Two statues are placed within a niche, while three are sculptures in the round. and provides a descriptive analysis of these funerary grave sculptures and portrait stelae, followed by a comparative analytical study that discusses the material from which the statues are carved. An overview of the artistic style, as gleaned from facial features, costume, and posture is provided, along with iconography. The identity and status of the owners of the statues will be addressed. Although these statues are unprovenanced, there will be an attempt to locate the workshops that produced them, and to date them.

## II. THE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

### **The First Relief: [FIGURES 1/ A, B & C]**

A limestone portrait stela of a young boy, Height 72cm, width 35cm, length 60cm. The portrait stela is well preserved, but some fragments are chipped out in the upper part of the niche. The portrait stela takes the form of a rectangular aedicula, and some fragments are missing at the outer partition of the top at the sides [FIGURE 1/A]. There is a very high relief figure of a boy standing inside the niche, frontally. The boy's facial features are calm and indicate that he is in the prime of his life. His thick neck supports a round, full face with a small chin. Meanwhile, his forehead is wide with some protruding lines, which indicates the presence of hair strands, although the rest of the head seems untextured. The ears protrude. The pronounced eyebrows are arched over heavy eyelids.

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<sup>1</sup>BRECCIA 1922: 82.

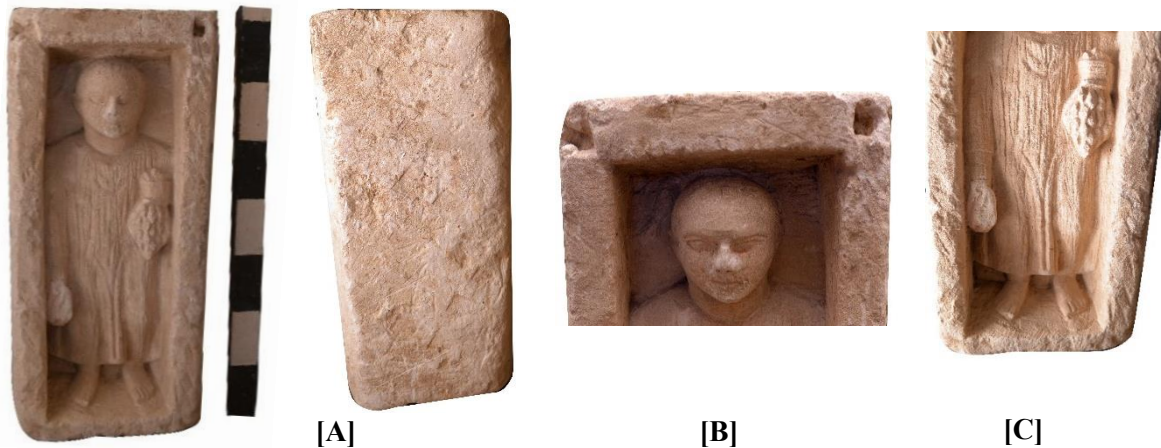
<sup>2</sup>ABDEL HAMID 2004: 1.

<sup>3</sup>THOMAS 2000: 6.

<sup>4</sup>Al-Ashmounin are located on the western shore of the Nile, northwest of Malawi. It was known as «Khamnu» in the ancient Egyptian texts, and «Hermopolis» in the Greek texts, meaning the city of the god Hermes. The area preserves the entrance to the city, and a huge number of stone blocks and architectural and decorative elements stored at the site and in the museum store in Ashmounin. NOUREDDINE 1999 :137-139.

<sup>5</sup>It was found through a seizure, belonging to the Prosecution of Bani Mazar, and it was preserved in the Al-Ashmounin storehouse, in a record of recording the artifacts seized in the cases.

The eyes are wide, bulging, and smooth and do not bear any indication of an iris. The boy's nose is long, with wide nostrils [FIGURE 1/B]. The boy wears a long, round-neck tunic reaching the ankle. Right at the tunic's neckline is wide V-shaped folds. The tunic has long sleeves and many pleats that narrow and gathers in the middle between the legs; these folds were executed with a light bas-relief carving. The boy's bare feet show from the bottom of the tunic and are exquisitely carved where the toes are depicted very accurately [FIGURE 1/C].



[FIGURE 1/ A, B &C]: A limestone grave sculpture with a boy inside preserved as N<sup>o</sup>.705 in the Ashmounin storehouse ©Taken by the researcher.

In his left hand, the boy holds a pine-like plant that is conical in shape. In his right hand, which is parallel to the length of the body, the boy holds an object, perhaps a wreath. This grave sculpture can be compared to many other funeral portrait stelae<sup>6</sup>. The first of these examples is a fourth-century AD grave sculpture displayed in the Michigan Museum of Art, which was [FIGURE 2]<sup>7</sup> found at Antinopolis «Al-Sheikh Ebada»<sup>8</sup>. The similarities appear in the pose where the figure of the deceased is standing in a niche-shaped chapel. They are both wearing similar clothes and hold a wreath in the right hand.

The main difference is that the ceiling of the niche in this example is rounded but in the stela from Ashmounin, the entryway to the niche is rectangular. Also, the deceased is

<sup>6</sup> Also from the comparison examples: a funerary painting of a boy from Antinopolis, «Sheikh Ubadah», preserved in the Egyptian Museum under the number S. 18110. The boy sits inside a rectangular niche, and from the inside it has a vaulted ceiling. The symbols he holds, as he holds a bunch of grapes in his right hand, while he holds a dove in his left hand. It dates from 300-395 AD; «Stele funeraria di fanciullo con in mano una colomba e un grappolo d'uva», in: [https://collezioni.museoegizio.it/it-IT/material/S\\_18110](https://collezioni.museoegizio.it/it-IT/material/S_18110) Accessed in 2/ 11/ 2022.

Another example was found at Samlout, and is preserved in a private collection in Amsterdam. SCHNEIDER 1975: PL.12-16; «Stele funeraria di fanciullo con in mano una colomba e un grappolo d'uva», [https://collezioni.museoegizio.it/it-IT/material/S\\_18110](https://collezioni.museoegizio.it/it-IT/material/S_18110) Accessed on 2/ 11/ 2022.

<sup>7</sup>«An Egyptian lainted limestone funerary stele», in: <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6067649/> Accessed in 2/ 11/ 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Antinopolis now Sheikh 'Ubāda, is known in Greek texts as Antinopolis (Ἀντινόου πόλις). It is located on the eastern bank of the Nile River, northeast of Mallawi, in Minya Governorate. It is characterized by Roman architecture and archaeological remains. NOUREDDINE 1999:135; «Antinoöpolis», in: <https://www.marefa.org/antinopolis>, Accessed in 5/ 12/ 2022.

depicted holding a bunch of grapes in the left hand instead of a pinecone. Stylistically, the Michigan statue differs in that the costume does not have many folds. There are additional differences in the depiction of facial features, such as the eyes, as well as the depiction of hair strands. The Michigan model is also painted, giving this statue a sense of life and realism.



[FIGURE 2]: Comparative example of a grave sculpture with a boy inside a niche Displayed at the Michigan Museum of Art.



[FIGURE 3]: Comparative example of grave sculpture with a boy inside a niche Displayed at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

The second example is a grave sculpture from Oxyrhynchus, which is displayed at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and dates to the third to the fourth century AD [FIGURE 3]<sup>9</sup>. This grave statue shows a boy standing in a niche supported by Corinthian columns. The similarities can be seen in the pose of the boy, who is standing in the niche with a wreath in the right hand while holding a pinecone in the left hand. Their costumes are also the same, except for the fact that the Nelson Atkin's boy wears a necklace, and his costume has no folds but is decorated from below and at the shoulders. In the Nelson-Atkins statue, the niche has a vaulted ceiling that is decorated with a large flower. Certain facial features are included, such as the iris and pupil of the eye. The hairstyle and figure are colored like the grave sculpture from Michigan [FIGURE 2].

There are many parallels to the first relief that date back to the late fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century AD, where there is a grave sculpture from Oxyrhynchus that depicts a boy with similar features, clothes, and attributes. One of these is preserved in the British Museum, N<sup>o</sup>.1795. Although the British Museum's example is of inferior quality compared to the others, there is an almost complete absence of Christian symbols, which may suggest an early date in the development of Christianity in Egypt<sup>10</sup>. From the comparative examples, the painted funerary sculpture likely dates the object of study to the third or fourth century AD.

<sup>9</sup>THOMAS 2000: FIGS.68, 71; «Grave Sculpture», in: <https://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/1880/grave-sculpture>, Accessed in 18/ 11/ 2022.

<sup>10</sup> BECKWITH 1963: 19, FIG.57.

### The Second Relief: [FIGURES 4/ A, B & C]

A limestone funerary sculpture<sup>11</sup> that has Height 43cm, Width 36cm. The upper part of the niche and the head of the figure have been cut away, with some erosion on the sides. The sculpture has a broken niche in its upper section, the inside of which is a headless bust, depicted frontally, and wearing a palliates pallium<sup>12</sup>, which is a cloak of the arm-sling type (arm-bearing type). The cloak has vertical folds on the sides, circular folds on the abdominal area [FIGURE 4/A], and below it a tunic with a round neck, with wide folds in the form of a letter V on the chest [FIGURE 4/B]. The left-hand rests on the the lower edge of the niche, holding a wreath of flowers [FIGURE 4/ C], while the right hand stretches out to rest on the folds of the cloak.



[FIGURES 4/ A, B & C]: A funerary bust inside a niche preserved N<sup>o</sup>.483 in the Ashmounin storehouse© Taken by researcher

This sculpture can be compared to one from Al -Bahnasa<sup>13</sup>, which is preserved in the Ashmounin Storehouse in Minya N<sup>o</sup>.397 [FIGURE 5]<sup>14</sup>. The Al-Bahnasa sculpture is similar in its representation of costume, especially in the V shape folds on the chest, as well as the oblique folds under the right arm. The inclusion of the funerary wreath is also similar. They differ in that the statue is complete, and the niche indicates that it originally had a pyramidal top.



[FIGURE 5]: A comparative Limestone portrait stela from Bahnasa

<sup>11</sup> Preserved in the Registry of Records and Archaeological Seizures for Case N<sup>o</sup>. 7136 of 1993, and preserved under N<sup>o</sup>.483 in the Ashmunain storehouse in Minya.

<sup>12</sup> The palliatus type of clothes is well known from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, with noticeable concentration in the Roman period. BIEBER 1959: 377.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Bahnasa, A village located 20 km west of the city of Bani Mazar in Minya. It was called in the ancient Egyptian texts «Barammad», meaning the meeting, and was known in the Greek texts as «Oxrynchos», meaning «the fish region», and it was the capital of the nineteenth region of Upper Egypt. NOUREDDINE 1999 :137.

<sup>14</sup> ASHOUR 2010: 66-67, FIG.5.

The second example is a grave sculpture found in Oxyrhynchus «Al-Bahnasa» in Minya, which was later preserved in the Greco-Roman Museum inv. N<sup>o</sup>.23375 [FIGURE 6]<sup>15</sup>. The similarities are evident in the shape, costume, wreath, and pyramidal roof of the tombstone, which also contains a bust of the deceased. However, the differences are that the tombstone has a high base, a high full pyramidal roof, and a thin wreath. Furthermore, the right hand is holding the cloak, meaning that the fingers are not extended as in the study model.



[FIGURE 6]: A comparative Limestone portrait stela from the Greek and Roman museum, Alexandria



[FIGURE 7]: A comparative Limestone portrait stela © Coptic Museum in Cairo, inv. N<sup>o</sup>.8616

The third example is a finished limestone portrait stela with a pyramidal roof. Currently, the portrait stela is preserved in Coptic Museum in Cairo, N<sup>o</sup>.8616 [FIGURE 7]<sup>16</sup>. The stela is similar in costume and wreath placement but differs in the gesture of the right hand, which is depicted with two fingers intertwined. These fingers appear fully extended and rest on the cloak roll<sup>17</sup>, as in the study model [FIGURE 4], and in the comparative example [FIGURE 5].

The limestone portrait stela from the Coptic Museum [FIGURE 7] has a pyramidal roof, based on comparative models, and includes a bust of the palliatus type. Its appearance was noted on paintings dating back to the Roman Empire, especially during the late republican and late antique periods<sup>18</sup>. The statue has high-quality carving, as the costume's drapery appears lively and natural; the details of the drapery reflect and fit the position that the statues had for the portrait stelae of the Fourth century AD<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> BRECCIA 1931-1932: 41, PL. XVII, 83; SCHMIDT 2003: 150, Cat. 167, PL.51

<sup>16</sup> ASHOUR 2010: 105, FIG.12.

<sup>17</sup> This hand is similar to that of the third-century painting depicting a standing woman in the Leiden Museum, in which the hand extends over the role of the cloak with fingers fully open. «Leiden-RMO-07 003 Roman, background fixed to FF9933, ERL11007 », in:

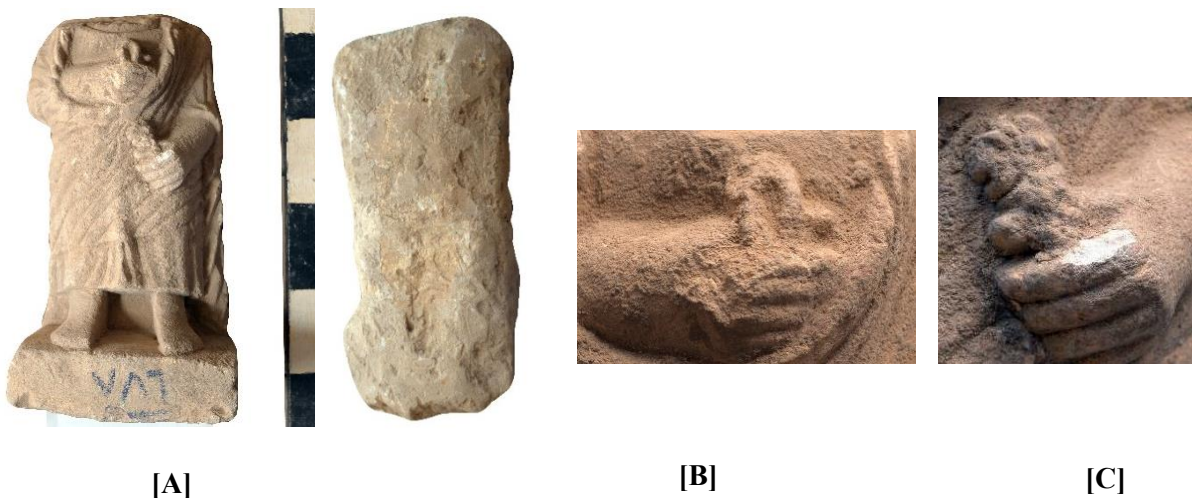
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/horemachet/2193871128/in/photostream/> Accessed in 8/ 11/ 2022.

<sup>18</sup> BIEBER 1959: 392, FIGS, 25-30.

<sup>19</sup> ASHOUR 2010: 76; TÖRÖK 2005: 208.

### The Third Relief: [FIGURES 8/ A, B & C]

A limestone funerary statue of a headless man, standing on a high pedestal<sup>20</sup>, Height 47cm, Width 40cm. The statue stands alone without a niche on a high pedestal. The figure wears a long tunic that reaches the ankle of the foot, with the feet peeking out from the bottom of the tunic. The toes are uncarved. The neckline of the tunic is round, and a fold appears at the chest, which takes the form of a widening semicircle. Many folds narrow and gather between the legs. The pallium cloak «Himation in Greek» of the arm-sling type is worn over the tunic [FIGURE 8/A]. There are small circular folds at the shoulders, and circular folds on the abdominal area. The figure's right hand is extended outward and is holding a garland of a folded rope made of small flowers [FIGURE 8/B]. Meanwhile, the left hand stretches out and holds a flower [FIGURE 8/C].



[FIGURE 8 A, B & C]: A limestone Funerary headless statue of a man preserved N<sup>o</sup>.786 in the Ashmounin storehouse©Taken by researcher

### The Fourth Relief: [FIGURES 9/A, B & C]

A limestone funerary headless statue of a man. The feet have been broken off<sup>21</sup>. High 50 cm, Width 24 cm. The funerary statue of a man wears a tunic that reaches the middle of the legs and has a wide round neckline. Wide folds appear [B] at the chest in the form of the letter V with many [A] in the lower part of the tunic. A pallium cloak of the arm-sling type is worn over the tunic, and numerous vertical folds appear at the shoulders on the sides [FIGURE 9/A]. The figure's right-hand crosses over the chest to pull the edge of the cloak from the other side [FIGURE 9/B]. This gesture is similar to the second model [FIGURE 4]. The left hand holds a wreath consisting of a folded rope assembled from small flowers [FIGURE 9/C].

<sup>20</sup> Preserved in the record of records and archaeological seizures of case 3 Ahwal, for the year 1997, and preserved under N<sup>o</sup>.786 in the Ashmounin magazine in Minya.

<sup>21</sup> Preserved in the Registry of Records and Archaeological Seizures for Case N<sup>o</sup>.8083 of 2001, and preserved under N<sup>o</sup>.681 in the Ashmounin storehouse in Minya.



[FIGURE 9 A, B & C]: A limestone Funerary headless statue of a man preserved under N<sup>o</sup>.681 in the Ashmounin storehouse© Taken by researcher

**The Fifth Relief: [FIGURES 10/A, B &C]**

A limestone funerary statue of a lady missing head and feet<sup>22</sup>. Height 75cm, Width 32cm. The statue depicts a standing lady wearing a Roman Bala cloak, under which is a long tunic with a semicircular neckline. The vertical folds of this outfit eventually gather in the middle between the legs in three longitudinal lines. The cloak wraps around the body [FIGURE 10/A]. The folds are depicted as vertical lines at the right shoulder but are more curvilinear around the abdominal area [FIGURE 10/B]. The right arm comes out of the cloak and holds what appear to be palm leaves carved with longitudinal lines. There is an undecorated, smooth, circular bracelet on the right wrist. The left arm holds up a wreath of a folded rope assembled from small flowers [FIGURE 10/B]. The figure wears two necklaces; the upper one has relief decorations consisting of a row of stacked rhombuses, and the lower necklace is a collar from which a circular pendant hangs [FIGURE 10/C].



[FIGURES 10/A, B & C]: Funerary statue of a Lady missing head and feet Preserved N<sup>o</sup>.679 in the Ashmounin storehouse© Taken by researcher

<sup>22</sup> Preserved in the Registry of Records and Archaeological Seizures of Case N<sup>o</sup>.1901 of 2010, and preserved under N<sup>o</sup>. 679 in the Ashmounin storehouse in Minya.



### III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYTICAL STUDY

**Materials:** The funerary statues were made of creamy white colored limestone, which was taken from the quarries of Saqqara. The Saqqara quarries have limestone that is light brown-white in color.

The artistic skillfulness of this sculpture group reflects the skill and ingenuity of the artist, specifically in his ability to formulate and highlight the anatomical features of the face and body. For example, the artist was interested in depicting the deceased in the first tombstone [FIGURE 1]. The detailed features of the deceased's head include its roundness and the visibility of the ears. The hair was depicted as a large mass, but also with careful detail in depicting individual tresses, which were carved out by small chisel work. This method of hairstyle is somewhat similar to the cap because the hair appears with a single clump over the head, or what is called Carlotta<sup>23</sup>.

The artist's accuracy is also shown in the details of the toes of the funerary statue in the first tombstone, which was carried out very carefully [FIGURE 1]. However, the artist did not succeed in carving the third funerary statue [FIGURE 8], where the feet appeared without toes, and the fingers of the right hand of the statue in the first tombstone hand were unclear [FIGURE 1]. However, he succeeded in carving the fingers of the left hand, which holds a pinecone. As for the fingers of the hand in the funerary statues [FIGURES 4, 8, 9, 10], the artist excelled in carving them very accurately, and in showing them in natural form.

The architectural design of the niche in the first tombstone [FIGURE 1], appeared completely rectangular, and there is no possibility of designing the upper part of it in a pyramidal shape. The linear upper surface of the niche makes it a truly distinctive shape. But the niche in the second tombstone [FIGURE 4] has its upper part broken, which makes it likely that the missing part was pyramidal, as in the comparative models [FIGURES 6-7].

As for the clothes [TABLE 1], the cloak and tunic look Greek. In terms of technique and style the formulation and shape of graceful folds are executed with skill, accuracy, and flexibility. It is clear here that we are facing the realistic style that characterized the Alexandria school during the Hellenistic era and until the Roman era<sup>24</sup>.

The funerary statue appears in the first relief [FIGURE 1] wearing a long tunic with long sleeves, while the funerary statues [FIGURES 4, 8-9] were wearing the Roman palliates for men «Greek Hemation» of the arm-bearing style, and the Pallas in [FIGURE 10] for women, a type that became famous in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. The Pallas was more commonly worn in Roman times, where it is predominantly associated with

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<sup>23</sup> This new method of hairdressing appeared after the death of Caracalla, and continued throughout the third century AD, and thus the single, prominent, dense tufts, which were executed by means of a drill, disappeared. AZIZA 2010 :177.

<sup>24</sup> BAKER 2007: 28.

intellectualism and urbanity. Because the Romans used to depict their dead in uniforms<sup>25</sup>, the use of this classical style emphasizes Hellenistic ethnicity and origin<sup>26</sup>.

The artist was also interested and excelled in showing the folds of the costume naturalistically. He only depicted deceased children and ladies in a robe from everyday Roman-era life. This type of robe is represented by the folds of the pallium cloak, which continues from right to left, while the edge of the cloak hangs from the left shoulder with clear creases. Some folds indicate that there is a tunic below the cloak. The clothing is depicted precisely, and the artist has succeeded in showing the folds naturalistically. In the second and fifth reliefs [FIGURE 4 & 10], the fabric is shown with a thin, elastic quality.

For the first, third, and fourth reliefs [FIGURES 1 & 8-9] the folds are thick and numerous, reflecting the thickness of the fabric used in the manufacture of the cloak, which probably fits the environment of the Ashmounin region.

The jewelry in the fifth relief [FIGURE 10], varies between two necklaces and a bracelet. For the two necklaces, the upper is a row of stones in a rhombic shape, and the lower necklace is a collar with a circular pendant [TABLE 2]. A painted example of this jewelry is seen in a portrait from Philadelphia in Fayoum dated from 175-200 AD; it is now preserved in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles [FIGURE 11]<sup>27</sup>. In the portrait, a lady wears two necklaces with different decorations. The bottom pendant takes the shape of a rhombus and has a round, gold pendant in the middle of it, which makes it likely that the pendant in the study model is also made of gold.



[FIGURE 11]: Comparative example Necklace on Portrait of a Lady from Philadelphia.

The bracelets<sup>28</sup> were one of the oldest types of ornaments known to the ancient Egyptian and lasted until the Ptolemaic and Roman eras [TABLE 2]. There are comparative models of the bracelet on the wrist of the fifth statue [FIGURE 10/B], including:

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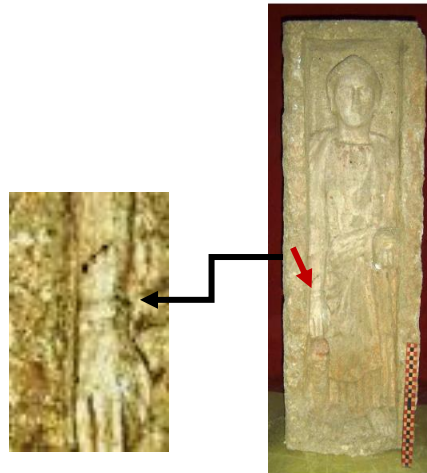
<sup>25</sup> The military were depicted in tunics, military uniforms, and tools of war, while civilians were depicted in tunics, toga cloaks, and palliums, and women were depicted in their long robes with a cloak over them. AL-SHAHAT 2006: 57.

<sup>26</sup> ASHOUR 2010: 75.

<sup>27</sup> THOMPSON 1982: 58-59 ; SVOBODA 2020: 114, FIG.11[2].

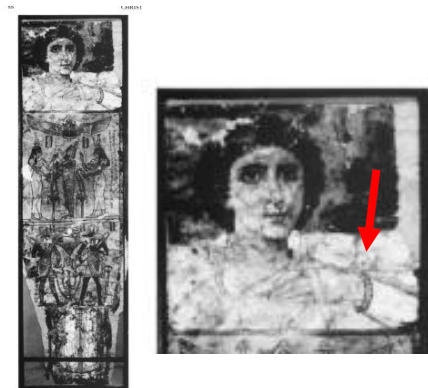
<sup>28</sup> The ancient Egyptians adorned themselves with bracelets since the beginning of the Neolithic period. It is intended to decorate the arm around the wrist, or the upper arms; Most of the bracelets were worn on the upper right arm because it was the subject of honor. Both men and women are adorned with it; The large number of bracelets is due to their use as a talisman more than for decoration, and the shapes of the bracelets evolved, as they were at first round rings, then they became wide, and their sides were round. ARMAN & HERMANN 1987: 237.

-A funerary stela of a lady wearing the same bracelet kept in the Ashmunin storehouse with number 156 and dated from 275 -300 AD [FIGURE 12]<sup>29</sup>.



[FIGURE 12]: A comparative example of the bracelet on a funerary stela N°.156 preserved in the Ashmunein Magazine

Also, the bracelet is depicted on a shroud of a woman named Tashret and Johor «Tasherytwedjahor» from Assiut and is currently preserved at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston with an accession number of 54.993, and dating back to the first century AD [FIGURE 13]<sup>30</sup>.



[FIGURE 13]: Comparative example of the bracelet on the first century AD, which is preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston

## Symbols Accompanying Funeral Statues, [TABLE 3].

### Pine Cone:<sup>31</sup>

There are many funeral tombstones depicting the deceased holding a bunch of grapes, as shown in the comparison models [FIGURES 2&3], but the funerary painting in the subject of the study [FIGURE 1] shows that the deceased is holding a pinecone instead<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> ASHOUR 2010: 65, FIG.1.

<sup>30</sup> RIGGS 2002: 88, FIG.2.

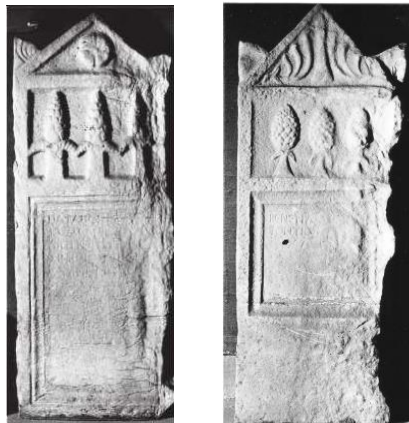
<sup>31</sup> Pine trees are evergreen woody trees with a distinctive aromatic scent. The pine tree consists of a large main trunk with horizontal branches growing on its sides, gradually getting smaller towards the top, giving it a conical shape.

The pinecone is conical in shape and has a trunk that the deceased holds from above, clearly showing all the constituent elements of this plant. The pinecone also consists of several lobes(bracts), unlike grapes that take a circular shape. The pine is associated with Roman funerary rituals, and many pinecones and their remains have been found in Roman temples and cemeteries in Britain<sup>33</sup>. The pinecone was used as an offering presented to the gods inside the temples, and the remains of a spinecone were found in the temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh in London, which dates to the early third century AD<sup>34</sup>.

The pinecone is of great importance to the Egyptians, where in some Egyptian papyri the souls of the dead are shown entering the Hall of Osiris with pinecones on their heads. In Greece, there is a pinecone on top of the stick of Dionysius or Bacchus «thyrsus» symbolizing prosperity, fertility, and pleasure. Among the Babylonians, the pinecone represents the holy water of life for the Assyrians. The pinecone is also a reference to the third eye and the pineal gland, which was so named because it is similar in shape to a pinecone. Accordingly, the pinecone also symbolizes immortality and knowledge<sup>35</sup>.

Romans saw the pinecone as a symbol of immortality, and although the pinecone was frequently used in most ancient Near Eastern Arts, it was not used much in Coptic art, especially on textiles<sup>36</sup> except in a few rare cases.

There are models of funerary tombstones on which three pinecones are depicted in the full form of Volkov. These are preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Skopje, Macedonia [FIGURE 14/ A&B].<sup>37</sup>



[A]

[B]

[FIGURES 14/ A, B]: Comparative examples of pine cones on grave sculpture in Volkovo preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Macedonia

<sup>32</sup> Pine nuts are called Pinus in Latin, and there are five species of pine nuts found throughout the Mediterranean region. YILMAZ 2013: 135,142, 145.

<sup>33</sup> The pine cone can tolerate a lack of oxygen, so large quantities of it were found in Roman tombs, and samples were taken in the 1970s, where charred pine cones and whole cones were found. LODWICK 2014: 58.

<sup>34</sup> More about the Temple of Mithras in Karoo burg. MAYERS 2017.

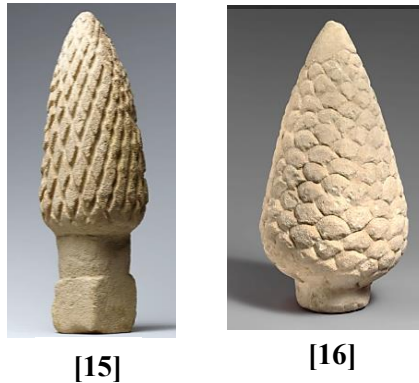
<sup>35</sup> AL-SALIHI 2022: 3-4

<sup>36</sup> There is a thin piece of tapestry kept in the storehouse of the Coptic Museum, on which a pine fruit is woven as a single decorative unit. It is similar in shape to the pine cone in the hand of the boy on the funerary stela, which is the subject of the study. It is dated to the fourth or fifth century AD. EL-SHARKAWY 2008: 348.

<sup>37</sup> PROEVA 2017: 153, FIG.7.

Also depicted is a solitary pinecone made of limestone, which is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum [FIGURES 15&16]<sup>38</sup>This limestone pinecone is similar to the pine cone held by the deceased in the first model [FIGURE 1] in the form of lobes(bracts) and in the protruding part above, which the boy holds.

It should be noted that this funerary symbol, which is likely to be a pinecone, did not appear in statues and portraits dating back to before the third century AD.



[FIGURES 15&16]: Comparative examples of limestone pine cones preserved at the Metropolitan Museum

### Funeral wreath:

The funeral wreath is a bouquet decorated with various types and shares of flowers [TABLE 3]. There was controversy about the symbolism and interpretation of the wreaths found in the, the wreath in the first and second tombstones [FIGURES 1& 4]. One opinion is that the wreath is actually a leather money bag.<sup>39</sup>

Others believe that it is a bouquet<sup>40</sup>, or a fist of wheat spikes<sup>41</sup> since the presence of rows taking the shape of wheat spikes is evident in some examples. Another interpretation is that it is a plant wreath with a funerary tint<sup>42</sup>. The researcher agrees with the second and fourth opinions, which is that it is a bouquet or a floral wreath with a funerary tint. The deceased has been shown carrying flowers since the Ptolemaic era, and a common ancient Egyptian influence appears especially in the paintings of Kom Abobello, which depict the deceased carrying a bunch of flowers<sup>43</sup>.

In the first half of the third century AD, another form of the plant wreath appeared on the Fayoum<sup>44</sup> images and appears in the study models [FIGURES 5-7] where it took a different form. The wreath is a group of flowers gathered in a folded rope held by the deceased, which sometimes takes a braided form below. The plant wreaths sometimes consist of bay leaves and solid fruits «Dom» or ivy or from buds and blooming flowers. It seems that the wreath was braided with its various elements into a single unit, perhaps

<sup>38</sup>«Limestone votive pine cone », in: <https://picryl.com/media/limestone-votive-pine-cone-b0d536>. Accessed in 18 /12/ 2022.

<sup>39</sup> BOTTI 1936: 32.

<sup>40</sup> BRECCIA 1939: 97-8.

<sup>41</sup> COLLIGNON 1911: 357.

<sup>42</sup> DYGGVE 1942: 230; IBRAHIM 1992: 490.

<sup>43</sup> EDGAR 1903: 45.

<sup>44</sup> DYGGVE 1942: 102,157-159.

making a special wreath for the deceased using evergreen plants, «Bay, Ivy, and Dom»; these are all plants symbolizing eternal life. Wreaths were also used in funeral rituals in cemeteries and are commonly depicted on sarcophagi in Rome and Alexandria.<sup>45</sup>

There is a comparative example of the folded funeral wreath on a tombstone preserved in the Ashmonin storehouse N<sup>o</sup>.678, which dates to the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century AD [FIGURE 17]<sup>46</sup>. The tombstone depicts a lady holding a large, folded wreath in her left hand. Another image of a large wreath is seen in the left hand of a lady depicted on a grave sculpture dating back to 160 AD, and which is now preserved in the Harvard Art Museum [FIGURE 18]<sup>47</sup>.



**[FIGURE 17]: Comparative example of a wreath of a folded rope on a Tombstone of a Lady Preserved in the Ashmonein storehouse**



**[FIGURE 18]: Comparative example of the large-scale wreath of a folded rope on a tombstone of a lady preserved in the Harvard Art Museum**

Also, the wreath was depicted in a large, folded form in Fayoum portraits, such as in a painting dating from 200-230 AD, in which a boy holds a folded wreath of flowers in

<sup>45</sup> IBRAHIM 1992: 529.

<sup>46</sup> SAAD 2022: 129, FIG.1.

<sup>47</sup> VERMEULE 1990: 162, FIG.148.

his left hand and a cup in the other. This painting is now kept in the Brooklyn Museum. [FIGURE 19]<sup>48</sup>.




[FIGURE 19]: Comparative example of a wreath of a folded rope on a Portrait of a Boy from Fayoum preserved at the Brooklyn Museum.



[FIGURE 20]: The SA sign, a symbol of protection, is a hieroglyphic sign made of papyrus

It is clear from the previous examples that the wreath is large in size, but the wreath in the study models [FIGURES 8- 10] takes a thin size [TABLE 3]. Therefore, it is noted that the folded funeral wreath was different in thickness and size. In some portraits of

Fayoum, the wreath's shape is similar to the Hieroglyphic «SA» sign , which symbolized protection and was made of papyrus plant [FIGURE 20]<sup>49</sup>. It is likely that the folded form of the wreath is taken from this sign. A fourth-century AD portrait from the J. Paul Getty Museum depicts a person from Philadelphia shows him holding a folded wreath in his left hand, similar to the «SA» sign in the form of beams located on the top and sides [FIGURE 21]<sup>50</sup>. There is also a portrait of a lady, dated to 150 AD who has a thin folded wreath similar to the hieroglyphic sign of SA, in her right hand [FIGURE 22]<sup>51</sup>.



[FIGURE 21]: A model of a wreath of a folded rope resembling the S-a sign on a portrait of a man©preserved at the J. Paul Getty Museum

<sup>48</sup> SVOBODA & CAROLINE 2020: 72, FIGS.7,5.

<sup>49</sup> One of the distinctive emblems of the statues of the god Bess, as a sign of magical protection, and it was also specific to the goddess Tawert, the goddess of childbirth, and was found as an independent symbol on some magic wands that date back to the Middle Kingdom era. LUERKER 2000:149.

<sup>50</sup> THOMPSON 1982: 56-57.

<sup>51</sup> «An Egyptian Painted Wood Mummy Portrait of A woman », in: <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6136508> Accessed in 6/ 12/ 2022.



[FIGURE 22]: example of a wreath of a folded rope on a Portrait of a Fayoum Lady at the Brooklyn Museum

### Flower<sup>52</sup>

The symbols depicted with funerary figurines [TABLE 3], as in the third model [FIGURE 8] where flowers were of great importance for funeral rituals, were depicted on walls ceilings, and facades of most cemeteries. Special feasts with flowers and flowers, which symbolized fertility, were held, and the Romans put roses on their graves and offered the souls of the dead food from roses<sup>53</sup>.

### Palm Fronds

Palm fronds were considered a symbol of victory over death in Egyptian funerary rituals during the Ptolemaic and Roman eras, but especially during the Roman era. This symbol complements the pharaonic significance of palm fronds as a symbol of eternal life offered by the gods to kings in Egyptian temples. Palm fronds were painted on a few Greek mummy portraits as one of the religious symbols<sup>54</sup> and were also held by the deceased to ensure rebirth, and to overcome death. From the Nineteenth Dynasty until the Roman era palm branches in cemeteries guaranteed the deceased another life in the underworld. This is why the whole palm was placed in the grave of the deceased during the Greek and Roman eras. Palm leaves were also put in his hands to secure his rebirth<sup>55</sup>, so, likely, what the lady is holding in the fifth model [FIGURE 10] is palm leaves. There is a similar model on a Fayoum portrait preserved at the Dijon Museum of Fine Arts, dated to the third century AD [FIGURE 23]<sup>56</sup>. In this portrait, the figure holds a small green, palm leaf with a small, folded pink wreath in his right hand, while holding an olive branch in his left hand.

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<sup>52</sup> Flowers are among the common and favorite shapes of the ancient Egyptians, as well as in the Greek and Roman decorations, as they are among the designs that are easy to carve and decorate, in addition to the many symbolic meanings and connotations that refer to them. EL-SHARKAWY 2008: 315.

<sup>53</sup> SYRING 1992: 302.

<sup>54</sup> QUAEGBEUR 1978: 240

<sup>55</sup> KAPLAN 1999: 118.

<sup>56</sup> «Portrait d'homme barbu », in:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait\\_d%E2%80%99homme\\_barbu.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_d%E2%80%99homme_barbu.jpg) Accessed in 6/ 12/ 2022.





[FIGURE 23]: Model of Palm Fronds on a Portrait of a Man from Fayoum at the Dijon Museum of Fine Arts

The nature of funeral statues is determined by some indicators and connotations, such as the costume represented by the tunic and the pallium cloak, which became a funerary religious symbol indicating that the wearer is a pious, humble man when standing before the gods of the other world<sup>57</sup>. The clothing may indicate that the deceased [FIGURES 8-9] may be a priest, as there is a comparative example in a statue of the emperor's priest. This comparative statue is in Kyzikos, in the Museum of Istanbul, no. 582<sup>58</sup>. This statue uses the classical type to stress his Hellenic ethnicity and intellectual abilities. The jewelry in the fifth relief [FIGURE 10], and funerary symbols such as the funeral wreath indicate the importance and high social status of the deceased.

**Where to find tombstones and funerary statues:** The source is unknown, as it was found through a set, but through the comparison models the first tombstone [FIGURE 1] was likely found in Antinopolis «Al-Sheikh Ebada», since the comparison models [FIGURE 2- 3] are very similar to it. The second tombstone [FIGURE 4] is likely from the Oxyrhynchus area «Al-Bahnasa», due to the great similarity of the costume and wreath with the comparison models [FIGURE 5-6], which were found in Al-Bahnasa. It is also likely that they were made in the same artistic workshops. The funerary statues shown in FIGURES 8, 9, and 10, likely came from Fayoum, as evidenced by comparisons to symbolism seen in other Fayoum portraits.

## Historiography

The funerary tombstones of the study date back to the Roman era, specifically from the second century to the late fourth century AD. This period was characterized by the emergence of a new artistic style that encouraged a return to ancient culture. There was a cultural revival and a renaissance of ancient Roman artistic values<sup>59</sup>. The most important anchors on which one relies to chronicle these funerary tombstones and statues are the following:

The tunic seen in these portraits underwent developments and changes due to Roman influence on the societies they controlled, starting from the first century AD. First,

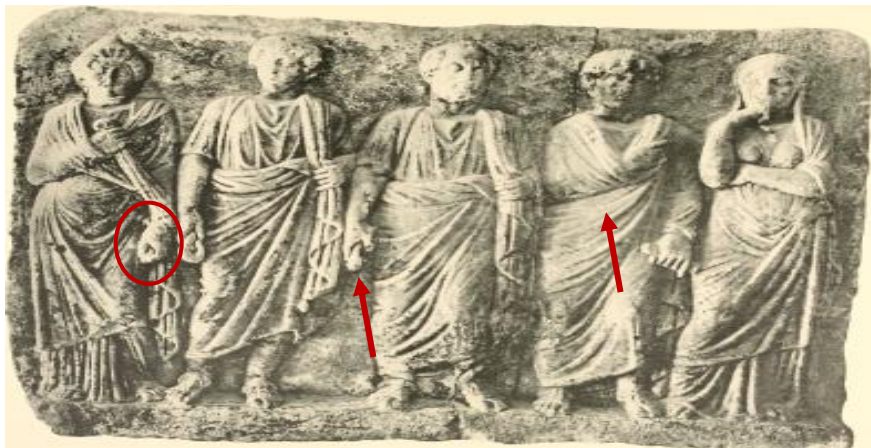
<sup>57</sup> AL-SHAHAT 2006: 89.

<sup>58</sup> BIEBER 1959: 398-399, FIG.39.

<sup>59</sup> RAMAGE 1995: 262.

the tunic was short and reached to the knees, but in the last quarter of the second century AD, the tunic extended to the middle of the legs; this is clearly shown in the statue of the deceased [FIGURE 9]. By the middle to the end of the third century, the tunic became wider, and longer, reaching the ankles<sup>60</sup>, as seen in the study models [FIGURES 1, 4, 8, 10].

The clothes, including the tunic, and cloak, were widespread in the late classical and Hellenistic era and gained popularity at the end of the second century BC. This clothing is also seen in the Roman era, especially during the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius, where there is a comparative model of a tombstone that features a group of the royal family, who wears the same clothes, «Tunic- Pallium cloak- Pala», as the study models and holds the folded funeral wreath [FIGURE 24]<sup>61</sup>.



**[FIGURE 24]: A wreath of a folded rope over and Clothes of a Tombstone Depicting the Royal Family of Emperor Antoninus Pius**

Also, it is evident after comparing similar models with study models that the hairdressing method of the first model, [FIGURE 1] «Calotta», began immediately after the death of Caracalla and continued throughout the third century AD<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> AL-SHAHAT 2006: 89.






<sup>61</sup> A rectangular tombstone made of marble, preserved in the Egyptian Museum under N<sup>o</sup>.27568, in the middle is Antoninus Pius, on the right is Marcus Aurelius, on the left is Seuss Verus, and next to Marcus stands Faustina the Younger, and on the other side is Faustina the Great. EDGAR 1903: 54, PL. XXVI.

<sup>62</sup> AZIZA 2010 :177.

#### IV. CONCLUSION



- The funerary sculptures were carved in local material and were depicted in the Roman style, which was influenced by Hellenistic art.
- The funerary tombstones and statues belonged to the upper class of Egyptian society during the Roman era, where the costume and funerary symbols indicated the high social status of the deceased.
- It is clear that the carving of the funerary statues was of high quality, which is shown in the lines representing the folds of clothing. The lively and natural depiction of the drapery reflects and fits the position that the statues had for the models of the third century AD.
- The clothes of the deceased were carved out in the realistic style that characterized the Alexandria School from the Hellenistic era until the Roman era.
- The symbols accompanying the funerary statues alternated between the pinecone, which symbolized eternity and knowledge, and the various types of funeral wreaths. The wreaths take distinctive shapes, shown as a folded rope held by the deceased, as well as flowers and palm fronds.
- The symbols accompanying the funerary statues reflect how much they were associated with funeral rituals, and their belief in immortality, protection, and eternal life.
- The tombstones and funerary statues may have been found in the area of Antinopolis «Al-Sheikh Ebada », and Oxyrhynchus «Al-bahnasa».
- It is concluded that the funerary tombstones of the study date back to the Roman era, especially in the period from the second century to the beginning of the fourth century AD.

*UNPUBLISHED GROUP RELIEFS [PORTRAIT STELAE AND GRAVE SCULPTURE]  
AT THE ASHMOUNIN STOREHOUSE IN MINYA*






Funerary Statues	The Clothes	The Description	The Date
The first funerary statue		<p>A long tunic that reaches the ankle of the foot, has a widened round neck, wide folds in the shape of a letter V, has long sleeves, and has many folds that narrow and gather in the middle between the legs. These folds are executed with a slight recessed carving</p>	<p>From the third to the fourth centuries AD</p>
The second funerary statue		<p>Pallium palliates "hemation" in Greek "arm-sling type, with vertical pleats on the sides, circular pleats on the abdomen, a tunic with a round neck, with wide V-shaped pleats on the chest</p>	<p>Mid third century AD</p>
The third funerary statue		<p>A long tunic that reaches the ankle of the foot and has a widened circular neck. There are many folds at the bottom of the tunic that narrow and gather between the legs.</p>	<p>Mid third century AD</p>
The fourth funerary statue		<p>A tunic that reaches the middle of the legs, has a widened round neck, and wide folds in the shape of a letter V appear on the chest. The lower part of the tunic appears has many folds. A pallium cloak is worn over the tunic and many vertical folds, which appear on the shoulders on the sides. The abaya is characterized by many folds</p>	<p>The last quarter of the second century AD</p>
The fifth funerary statue		<p>The Roman pala cloak, underneath which is a long tunic with a neck in the shape of a semicircle. The folds of this costume are designed in a vertical manner, and the folds gather in the middle between the legs in three longitudinal lines</p>	<p>Mid third century AD</p>

[TABLE 1]: The clothes on the funerary statues, the subject of the study ©Done by the researcher




*UNPUBLISHED GROUP RELIEFS [PORTRAIT STELAE AND GRAVE SCULPTURE]  
AT THE ASHMOUNIN STOREHOUSE IN MINYA*

Funeral Statue	Ornaments and Jewelry	The Description	The Date
The fourth funerary statue	 two necklaces	The upper one is decorated with a row of stones in the form of lozenges lined up in a row next to each other. The lower necklace is a collar from which a circular pendant hang.	From the second century to the third century AD
	 bracelet	Simple, smooth round bracelet with no embellishments.	From the second century to the third century AD

[TABLE 2]: Ornaments and jewelry of the funeral statue of the lady© Done by the researcher

Funerary Statues	Associated Symbols	The Definition	Its Symbolism
The first funerary statue		-Bouquet decorated with flowers -Leather money bag. -Funeral wreath.	It symbolizes eternal life and immortality
		A pine cone, with a trunk held by the deceased from above, consists of lobed bracts in a conical shape.	A symbol of eternity because it is an evergreen woody tree.
The second funerary statue		Funeral wreath	It symbolizes eternal life and immortality
The third funerary statue		A group of flowers collected in a folded rope held by the deceased. It consists of laurel leaves and hard fruits or ivy, or open buds and flowers, and its various elements are braided into one unit.	It symbolizes eternal life and immortality
		A blooming flower, as flowers were of great importance to funeral rituals.	It symbolizes fertility

*UNPUBLISHED GROUP RELIEFS [PORTRAIT STELAE AND GRAVE SCULPTURE]  
AT THE ASHMOUNIN STOREHOUSE IN MINYA*

Funerary Statues	Associated Symbols	The Definition	Its Symbolism
The fourth funerary statue		Palm fronds with prominent lines	The deceased holds it to secure a permanent and youthful life for him, to overcome death and resurrection again, and to secure his rebirth.
		A folded floral wreath that resembles the hieroglyphic sign for Sa.	It symbolizes protection
The fifth funerary statue		A folded floral wreath that resembles the hieroglyphic sign for Sa.	It symbolizes protection

[TABLE 3]: Symbols associated with funerary statues, the subject of the study© Done by the researcher

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