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The Facade of the Tel Arza Burial Cave: Architectural Style and a Comparative Study

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Introduction

The Tel Arza burial cave, also known as the "Two-Story Tomb," is one of the most elaborately decorated burial caves in the Second Temple period necropolis of Jerusalem (see Wiegmann and Baruch, this volume). Its facade, carved in bedrock, resembles that of a two-story edifice (Fig. 1): the lower story is designed as a *distylos in antis* facade, comprising two pseudo-Doric columns between two *antae* that are crowned by a Doric entablature, of which only the architrave and frieze have survived; the upper, partly-preserved story, bears the remains of two flat pilasters set atop molded bases. This paper presents an analysis of the architectural components of the decorated facade followed by a general discussion and comparative study of the composition of the entire facade as a means for providing a relative dating for the burial cave (for a detailed description of the facade and the exact measurements of its components, see Wiegmann and Baruch, this volume).

The Architectural Decoration

Antae Capitals

The capital of the *in situ* northern *anta* exhibits a series of moldings from bottom to top: fillet, *cyma reversa* and *cavetto*, and is topped by a rectangular *abacus* (see Wiegmann and Baruch, this volume: Figs. 7, 8). It is reminiscent of the *antae* capitals from the "Tomb of the Kings," identified as the Tomb of Heleni Queen of Adiabene and her family (Kon 1947: Fig. 11), and those from the "Frieze Tomb" (Macalister 1902:191). In the latter example, which shows a further simplification of the customary set of moldings, a simple slanting profile replaces the more common *cyma reversa* molding. The rather simple shape of the *antae* capitals from these three burial caves (the Tel Arza Tomb, the Tomb of the Kings and the "Frieze Tomb") stands in contrast to the *antae* that decorated other Early Roman period burial caves in Jerusalem, e.g., the Tomb of Zachariah (Avigad 1954: Fig. 47), the Tomb of Absalom (Avigad 1954: Fig. 57) and the "Grape-Clusters" Tomb (Macalister 1900: Pl. III),

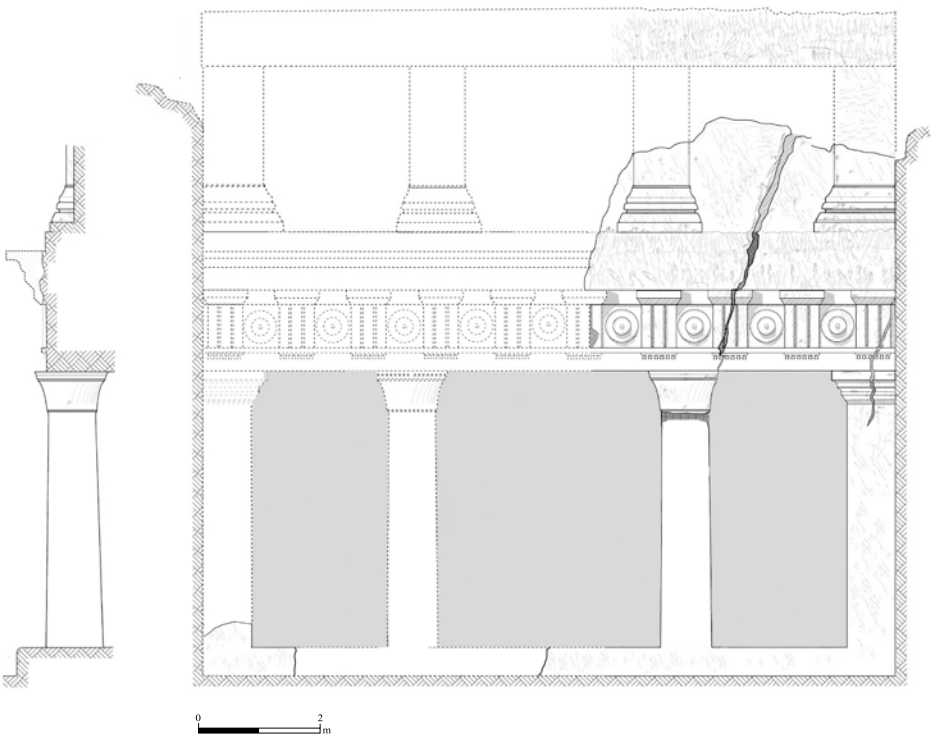

Fig. 1. Reconstruction of the facade, looking west
(prepared by Yuval Baruch, Alexander Weigman and Yakov Shmidov).

which present a more complex series of moldings.[1] Although the shape of the *anta* capital is not necessarily a chronological indicator, the similarity between the Tel Arza capitals and those of the Tomb of the Kings, dated to c. 50 CE (on the identification and dating of the Tomb of the Kings to the mid-first century CE, see Kon 1947:1–8), conforms to other characteristics of the tomb (see below), indicating a mid-first century CE date for the Tel Arza burial cave.

Pseudo-Doric Column Capitals

The capital of the northern freestanding column is pseudo-Doric, with an *echinus* in the shape of a tall *cavetto* (see Wiegmann and Baruch, this volume: Figs. 12, 13). Several capitals of the same type are known from Early Roman period Jerusalem, one of them was found *ex situ* in the Giv'ati Parking Lot excavations on the western slopes of the City of

[1] Similar *antae* capitals were found inside the Double Gate passageway (Shani and Chen 2001: Fig. 11); at Khirbat Qana, where a torus appears between two *cavetto* moldings (Richardson 2004: Pl. 20); and at Gamla (Peleg-Barkat 2010: Pl. 5.14:23).

David (Peleg-Barkat 2013: Fig. 8.1:5). The excavators of that site identified the first-century CE large building nearby as part of the palace complex of Queen Heleni of Adiabene and her sons (Ben-Ami and Tchekhanovets 2011). Similar capitals were preserved in two other decorated burial caves in Jerusalem: Tomb II in Sanhedriyya (Jotham-Rothschild 1952: Pls. VI–VII) and a tomb in Wadi Qadum (Avigad 1967: Fig. 11).

This type of capital seems to continue a local Hellenistic tradition, as the capitals are similar to the *cyma recta* and the simpler *cavetto* capitals that were common in third- and second-century BCE sites in Judea, e.g., Maresha (Oren and Rappaport 1984:133–135, Fig. 11, Pls. 12C; 17B–E, H; 18A–B).[2]

Doric Architrave and Frieze

The architrave is very low (0.15 m), less than one-quarter of the total height of the frieze (0.52 m). The usual ratio in classical Doric architecture is c. 1:1.5 (Vitr. *De Arch.* XIV:3.4). Nevertheless, low Doric architraves do appear in Early Roman period Judea, as for example in the *distylos in antis* tomb facades at Khirbat Samiya, Deir ed-Derb and Umm al-'Amad (Peleg-Barkat 2015: Figs. 7; 9; 29).

Only the northern part of the Doric frieze of the Tel Arza burial cave was preserved, including four triglyphs and a small portion of a fifth one (Fig. 1). The metopes between the triglyphs are carved with discs. Various types of discs are known to have been carved in metopes of Doric friezes in Early Roman period Judea. Here, none of the four preserved metopes are identical: three have two concentric discs, one atop the other, and a central circular convex knob, the diameter of the outer disc and that of the knob varying; and the fourth disc has a ring-shaped molding on top of the lower disc with a kind of knot or loops on its top part (see Wiegmann and Baruch, this volume: Fig. 13), resembling a bronze door-knocker ring or a very simplified wreath.[3] Similar Doric friezes adorn the Tomb of Absalom in the Kidron Valley (Avigad 1954: Figs. 56; 58) and the Tomb of the Kings (Kon 1947: Fig. 10, Pl. IVb). Discs also decorate some of the friezes of the decorated tomb facades in the western Hebron Hills, such as Rujm el-Fahjeh and Khirbat Samiya (Peleg-Barkat 2015: Figs. 25; 28; 29). The discs on the Tomb of Absalom frieze most resemble those on the facade of the Tel Arza burial cave. In the Tomb of Absalom, the discs also differ in size and in the number of concentric bands, and they seem to represent blocked-out rosettes

[2] The Maresha capitals were probably influenced by the Alexandrian lotus capitals (see McKenzie 1990: Pl. 191c).

[3] Wreaths appear quite often on Doric friezes of funerary monuments in Early Roman Judea, e.g., on the center of the friezes on the facades of the Tomb of the Kings (Kon 1947: Fig. 10); in the Refuge of the Apostles Cave (Dussaud 1912: No. 48); in the Frieze Tomb (Avigad 1950–1951:100, Fig. 5); and on the facade of a tomb at Maqati 'Abud (The Quarries of 'Abud) in western Samaria (Magen 2008:143–145, Fig. 7). Wreaths appear also on other parts of tomb facades, ossuaries and sarcophagi in first-century CE Jerusalem (Macalister 1900: Pl. III; Avigad 1954:102–103, Fig. 63; Rahmani 1994:41–42, Pls. 3:14R; 10:60R; 28:206L; 40:282; 44:308R; Foerster 1998:307–308, Pls. 120:5; 124:4, 6).

of various types. Such rosettes normally adorn Doric friezes in Herodian Judea, examples of which exist at Masada (Foerster 1995: Figs. 225–230), Herodium (Peleg-Barkat 2014: Fig. 5), Jerusalem (Rahmani 1982: Pl.XX:2; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer 1994:27) and western Samaria (Peleg-Barkat 2015: Figs. 4; 7–10).[4] The phenomenon of blocked-out shapes gaining autonomy and popularity is very common in Herodian architecture, as can be seen in the common use of blocked-out Ionic and Corinthian capitals and cornices (Peleg-Barkat 2014:152–153). It may be suggested that at some stage, the blocked-out rosettes, namely the discs, became an independent motif, as can be seen for example in the uniform discs adorning the facade of the Tomb of the Kings (Kon 1947: Fig. 10, Pl. IVb).

Pilaster Bases

The bases of the pilasters in the upper story of the tomb facade are an unusual variant of the Attic column base (see Wiegmann and Baruch, this volume: Figs. 7, 12). Above the low plinth,[5] two *tori* and a *cavetto* are carved. The lower *torus* has an angular slanting profile, instead of the common convex shape, and the upper *torus* is also somewhat angular. Atop the upper *torus*, a high *cyma reversa* profile replaces the small apophyge that usually appears in the joint between the column base and the shaft. Attic bases are the predominant column-base type in Early Roman Judea (Peleg-Barkat 2014:88). As with the column bases, most *anta* or pilaster bases in Herodian-period Judea are of the eastern Attic type;[6] nevertheless, other types also existed, e.g., the *cyma reversa* profile bases in the lower story of the Tomb of Absalom (Avigad 1954: Figs. 55; 56). While Attic bases are common, *cyma reversa* bases are rare, and the combination of both, as found in the Tel Arza burial cave, is unparalleled and attests to the independence and ingenuity of its architect and masons.

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[4] There is only one example of a Doric frieze that combines discs and carved rosettes—Tomb B in Maqati ʻAbud in western Samaria (Peleg-Barkat 2015:18–22).

[5] Although most Herodian Attic bases lack such plinths, there are several such examples with a plinth in Jerusalem, e.g., the bases for the *distylos in antis* columns in the Umm al-ʻAmad Cave (Avigad 1945: Fig. B3), a column base found in the "Tomb of the House of Herod" in Nikephoria (Schick 1892: Pl. 18:6), and in Upper and Lower Herodium (Corbo 1989: DF40, DF104; Netzer 1981: Fig. 69). It should be stated that all the examples of column bases carved with plinths date no earlier than King Herod's reign; therefore, it seems that this architectural feature was introduced into Judea under the rule of this king, presumably due to Roman influence. While the use of plinths was common outside Judea since the Hellenistic period, it was only under Augustus that it became an integral part of column bases throughout the empire. The incorporation of the plinth made it easier to achieve the desirable ratio of 5:6 between the height of the shaft and that of the entire column, including its base and capital (Wilson-Jones 2003:152).

[6] Several examples of Attic pilaster or anta bases dating from the time of Herod and from the first century CE were found throughout Judea, e.g., in the Herodian monumental structure west of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, that may have functioned as a nymphaeum or triclinium (Onn and Weksler-Bdolah 2011: Figs. 8–10); in the Dier ed-Derb tomb in western Samaria (Magen 2008: Figs. 19–21); in the 'Palace of Hilkiya' in the Hebron Hills (Damati 1982:120); and in the basilica and several dwellings at Gamla (Peleg-Barkat 2010:163–164, Fig. 5.9:8–11).

Comparative Study

There is some resemblance between the style and form of the architectural decorative components of the Tel Arza facade and those of first-century CE tombs in the Jerusalem necropolis, e.g., the Tomb of the Kings and the Tomb of Absalom (see above). The analysis of the composition of the entire facade also points to a first-century CE date.

The Tel Arza burial cave belongs to a fairly large group of tombs with decorated facades in the necropoli of Jerusalem, western Samaria and the western Hebron Hills during the late Second Temple period. These tombs were owned by affluent Jewish families. Many of the decorated tombs exhibit a *distylos in antis* facade, i.e., two free standing columns between two *antae* that flank the entrance into the tomb. This group of *distylos in antis* tombs comprises simple tombs, such as the Tomb of Nicanor on Mount Scopus (Avigad 1967:119–124) and the Qasr el-Karme Tomb in Sanhedriyya (Jotham-Rotschild 1952:23–38), alongside tombs with a more elaborate decoration (including a decorated entablature), such as the "Tomb of the Kings" (Kon 1947), the Umm al-'Amad Cave (Avigad 1945:75–82) and the Deir ed-Derb tomb (Qarawat Bani Hassan) in western Samaria (Peleg-Barkat 2015:78–91).

The surviving free-standing columns in *distylos in antis* tombs bear either Ionic, Doric or pseudo-Doric capitals. Rock-cut tombs with Ionic *distylos in antis* facades are common in the Hellenistic architecture of Asia Minor, especially in Lycia (Bean 1978:40, Pls. 2; 3), while Doric *dystilos in antis* facades are characteristic of Hellenistic-period decorated tombs in Alexandria (Fedak 1990: Figs. 172a; 175; 176; 179a; 182).[7]

The earliest example of a burial cave with a *distylos in antis* facade from Judea is the Tomb of Bene Ḥezir in the Kidron Valley, dated to the end of the second century BCE or the first half of the first century BCE, prior to Herod's accession to power in 37 BCE.[8] Several characteristics support a late Hellenistic, i.e., Hasmonean, date for this facade:[9] an absence

[7] The *distylos in antis* facades of the Alexandrian tombs do not appear on the exterior, as in the cases of Lycia, Judea and Petra, but on the face of the wall leading from an interior courtyard into the main burial chamber.

[8] Avigad suggested to date the tomb to circa the mid-second century BCE, based on the exclusive use of Doric elements and the resemblance of the decoration to the painted facade at the Tomb of Apolophanes in Maresha (Avigad 1954:51–59). However, the existence of burial niches (loculi/*kukhim*) in the tomb, introduced in Jerusalem only under Hasmonaean rule, led Barag to date the tomb not earlier than the last quarter of the second century BCE (Barag 2003:95). Later on, Avigad changed his mind, suggesting a later dating for the tomb in the first half of the first century BCE (Avigad 1976:630). This proposal was accepted by Kloner and Zissu, who reexamined the dating of the phases in the tomb (Kloner and Zissu 2007:245).

[9] A survey of Second Temple period architectural decorative elements in Judea has shown that Doric friezes dated prior to Herod's reign had blank metopes, while Doric friezes from Herod's reign or later had metopes carved with rosettes or disks. Similarly, the lack of guttae and mutules on the soffit of the Doric cornice also indicates a date from Herod's reign onward, as Hellenistic Doric cornices from Judea had plain soffits, while the later ones were carved with guttae (Peleg-Barkat 2014:144–146). The many deviations from the Classical Doric order, such as the fact that the triglyph's width is larger than its height and the appearance of three guttae instead of the customary six below each triglyph, are also characteristic of the architectural decoration of Judea during the Hellenistic and Hasmonaean periods (Peleg-Barkat 2007:35).

of decorative elements that were introduced into Judea in the Early Roman period, such as the modillion cornices or orthodox Corinthian capitals; an exclusive use of Doric elements, in contrast to Early Roman period tombs in the necropolis of Jerusalem that are decorated in a mixture of elements from several orders; and the fact that the metopes of the Doric frieze and the soffit of the cornice were left blank. Another tomb, found at Ramat Bet Shemesh near the ancient site of Bet Naṭṭif (Peleg-Barkat 2015:115–118, Fig. 32), has a simple Doric facade and seems to date to the same period.

Other examples of *distylos in antis* facades show more elaborate compositions; they are usually carved with rosettes or discs in the metopes, and their decoration combines hybrid shapes, e.g., the Doric–Ionic cornice of the Umm al-'Amad Cave (Vincent and Stève 1954: Pl. XCIX:VII), and mixed orders, mostly incorporating Ionic columns with Doric friezes and modillion cornices. In an earlier research, I pointed out the tendency toward an increase in complexity, richness and density of the tomb decorations in Early Roman period Jerusalem (Peleg-Barkat 2012). This is manifested, for example, in the combining of elements of different architectural orders. It seems that the extensive and elaborate decoration of the tombs at the end of the first century BCE and the first half of the first century CE reflects the desire of the affluent families to outperform the decorations of other contemporary and earlier funerary monuments.

The Tel Arza burial cave belongs to the later and more elaborate group of tombs, dating from the time of King Herod until 70 CE. Nevertheless, it is the only example in this group that has an upper story atop a *distylos in antis*. Only one other funerary monument from late Second Temple period Judea has more than one story, containing columns or pilasters—the mausoleum on the northeastern slope of Herodium (Peleg-Barkat and Chachy 2015).[10]

While multistoried mausolea are abundant outside Judea, two-storied tomb facades are not as common. Examples are known from Macedonia, south Italy and the Nabataean realm (Fedak 1990:138, 142, 157, 225, 229, 230, 232–235). In Petra, multistoried rock-cut tomb facades are more common than in any other site, exhibiting either engaged half-columns or dwarf pilasters[11] in the upper story. Galling (1936: Fig. 5) and Avigad (1950–1951: Fig. 8) reconstructed dwarf pilasters in the upper story of the Tel Arza burial cave facade, in a fashion similar to that of the Nabataean tombs. Such a reconstruction, however, seems impossible for the Tel Arza facade as in the Nabataean tombs, the dwarf pilasters in the upper story are much shorter than the engaged half-columns in the lower story of the facade (c. 1:2.5), whereas the Tel Arza unfinished pilasters of the upper story are about half the height of the columns in its lower story (the height of the unfinished pilasters relies on Galling 1936: Fig. 4; see also reconstruction in Fig. 30). In my opinion, it seems more probable that the architect of the Tel Arza tomb drew his inspiration from Hellenistic monumental double-

[10] The Tomb of Absalom in the Kidron Valley had an upper story, albeit without columns, and the Tomb of the Kings might have had a cone-shaped structure or structures atop the burial cave with Corinthian columns.

[11] On the origin of the dwarf pilasters in Ptolemaic Egypt, see Zayadine 1974:58; Tholbecq 2007:131.

storied buildings and not from the Nabataean architecture; for some reason, however, the carving of the second story was never completed. Examples are known from the famous fourth-century BCE Judgment Tomb at Lefkadia (Kurtz and Boardman 1971: Fig. 75); the second-century Propylaeum in the Temple of Athena at Pergamon (Winter 2006: Fig. 71); and the Palace of Hyrcanus the Tobiad at ʻIraq al-Amir (Will and Larché 1991: Pl. 36).

Several deviations from the classical Graeco-Roman architectural styles were noted on the facade of the Tel Arza burial cave:

1) There is no correlation between the location and the intercolumniation distance of the columns in the lower story and those of the pilasters in the upper story (see also Galling 1936:118–119). The distance between the columns in the lower story (1.95 m) is larger than the distance between each of the columns and the adjacent *anta* (1.13 m), probably so that the entrance from the anteroom to the burial chamber is clearly visible from the front courtyard, and perhaps, also to facilitate an easy passage of heavy sarcophagi into the tomb. In contrast, the pilasters in the upper story are situated at equal intervals (c. 1.3 m).

2) The position of the columns in the lower story in unequal intervals caused a deviation from what is customary in Classical architecture. In the Classic composition, the triglyphs in the frieze were carved above the center of each column (Vitr. *De Arch.* IV:3.2), whereas in the Tel Arza burial cave, the columns are not aligned with the triglyphs of the Doric frieze and a metope is placed above each of the two columns.

3) The width of the pilasters in the upper story (0.4 m) is similar to that of the columns in the lower story (0.42 m), rather than considerably narrower, as was customary in Graeco-Roman architecture.[12]

The above-mentioned deviations clearly imply that the architect was familiar with the Hellenistic prototypes and was inspired by them, but was not interested in producing an accurate imitation thereof.

Galling (1936: Fig. 5) and Avigad (1950–1951: Fig. 8) proposed to reconstruct a gable above the surviving facade; this, however, remains speculative. To my mind, such a reconstruction is very unlikely, as in the Jerusalem necropolis there are no examples of tomb facades that combine a gable atop a *distylos in antis*. Moreover, there is a clear distinction between tombs with a *distylos in antis* facade and tombs with gables atop Ionic or Attic doorframes. It seems that the local architects consciously avoided imitating the

[12] According to Vitruvius (*De arch.* V:1.4), the columns of each story should be 25% narrower than the columns on which they are based on. Many examples, such as two-storied porticoes (e.g., the Royal Stoa of Attalos II in the Athenian Agora) follow this rule, while in other cases, such as at the Judgment Tomb at Lefkadia, the pilasters on the upper story are even narrower.

Hellenistic facades, which were associated with pagan temples. They chose either a facade with columns bearing an entablature without a gable, or a facade with a doorframe and a gable (e.g., the Tomb of the Sanhedrin, the Tomb of Jehoshaphat and the Tomb of the Grape Clusters), but never a gable atop columns bearing an entablature.

CONCLUSIONS

The facade of the Tel Arza burial cave is clearly one of the more elaborately decorated facades in the necropolis of Early Roman period Jerusalem. While several of its features show resemblance to two of the most monumental tombs in the necropolis—the Tomb of Absalom and the Tomb of the Kings, other characteristics are unique and reflect the desire of the architect or the patron to create a unique funerary monument. The introduction of innovative decorative styles was meant to attract the attention of the residents of Jerusalem and passersby, and communicate the high social status of the tomb owners, who, unfortunately, remain unknown to us.

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