

# Coins from the site of Marina el-Alamein: an overview of recent and some earlier finds



**Abstract:** A recently uncovered assemblage of 13 coins, some of significant dating value, but all loose finds from fieldwork conducted by the Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission, is discussed in the context of earlier coin finds recorded by the two Polish projects involved in the archaeological excavation and conservation of the Marina el-Alamein site on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. The focus is foremost on predominantly Roman provincial coins originating from the Alexandrian mint. One of these bears a mark indicative of its use as a pendant. Hadrian bronzes, most numerous in this group, along with coins of Trajan and Antoninus Pius corroborate a peak in the development of the town in the 2nd century AD, while late Roman imperial specimens are direct evidence for its continued functioning in the late antique period.

**Keywords:** Alexandria, Egypt, Antoninus Pius, Hadrian, cast, coins, halved coin, pendant, late Roman/provincial coinage

The assemblage of 13 bronze coins recorded in 2018 during the fieldwork of the Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission in the Graeco–Roman town at the site of Marina el-Alamein is modest and mostly poorly preserved (only four turned out upon cleaning to be in relatively good condition) [Table 1]. The archaeological contexts indicate that in all these cases the coins had been lost fortuitously.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roman provincial coins are identified in reference to *RPC* I–IV, occasionally to Dattari and Geissen III; Roman imperial coins refer to *RIC*. References still in need of confirmation are preceded with a “cf.”.

**Barbara Lichočka**

Institute of Mediterranean  
and Oriental Cultures,  
Polish Academy of Sciences

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About a hundred coins have been recorded at the Marina el-Alamein site from the start of research in 1986. Comprised in this number are several surface finds, including specimens picked up during the initial field survey in areas that were not later incorporated in the fieldwork. Identification and precise dating of the coins was constrained by two factors: the coins were not always fully cleaned when the field identification was made and, in several instances, identification was from photographs. Thorough attention was given coins that were directly relevant to the dating of archaeological contexts (as, for instance, identifications by Hans-Christoph Noeske, see Medeksza 1998: 76, Note 2) and these were published in reports presenting the outcomes of both the archaeological and conservation fieldwork. Naturally, the best preserved coins

like, for example, the Alexandrian coins struck under Vespasian, year 9, AD 76/77 (Inv. 29/S/117; *RPC* I: 2456; Czerner, Bąkowska-Czerner, and Grzegorek 2018: 73–74, Fig. 4) and Trajan, year 14, AD 110/111 (cf. *RPC* III: 4509; Daszewski et al. 2005: 90–91, Fig. 19), or an *Urbs Roma follis* minted under Constantine I, AD 330–337 (cf. *RIC* VII: Arles; Zych, Ołużski, and Wicenciak 2008: 87–88, Fig. 4) have always attracted the most attention. These specimens were all found in the city center, east of the forum<sup>2</sup> [Fig. 2:3, 9].

After many years of such practice, it may prove worthwhile to present the coin finds from another perspective, that is, as evidence for the coinage in circulation in this town on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt as well as in terms of the message usually conveyed by the various representations.

## PTOLEMAIC COINS

On the grounds of criteria for Ptolemaic bronze coinage developed by Olivier Picard and Thomas Faucher, the fairly legible Ptolemaic bronze specimen

found in 2018 (Inv. 9/SSR/18, *Table 1: No. 1, Fig. 1:1*) can probably be attributed to Series 2, 305–261 BC (Picard and Faucher 2012: 30, No. 116; Sv. 184, but



Fig. 1. Ptolemaic coins: 1 – 305–261 BC; 2 – 261–about 240 BC (Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission | photos R. Czerner)

2 Referred to in earlier reports as the “main square”, “central square” and “Town Square”.

Table 1. Coin finds from the 2018 season in chronological order

No.	Inv. no. [Fig.]	Metal Weight Diameter Die axis	Ruler Date	Obverse Reverse	Findspot
<b>Ptolemaic</b>					
1.	9/SSR/18 [Fig. 1:1]	AE 11.43 g 26.9 mm 12 h	305–261 BC	Head of Zeus r. Eagle l.	East of the N–S street running south from the SE corner of the forum; coins 9–13/SSR/18 together [Fig. 2:6]
2.	10/SSR/18	AE 22 mm	Ptolemaic(?)	Head r.(?) Illegible	
<b>Roman provincial, Egypt</b>					
3.	11/SSR/18 [Fig. 3:2]	AE 1.91 g 15.8 mm 12 h	Hadrian, AD 124/125	Head of Hadrian r. Crocodile	See above, No. 1
4.	1/S/18 [Fig. 3:6]	AE 26.13 g 35.5 mm 12 h	Hadrian AD 131/132	Bust of Hadrian r. Nilus	North of the E–W street running east from the SE corner of the forum, surface [Fig. 2:4]
5.	14/SSF/18 [Fig. 3:7]	AE 26.98 g 33 mm 12 h	Antoninus Pius AD 141/142	Bust of Antoninus Pius r. Elpis	N–S street running south from the SE corner of the forum, surface [Fig. 2:5]
6.	13/SSR/18	AE 22 mm	1st–2nd century AD	Illegible Reclining figure(?)	See above, No. 1
7.	22b/B/18 [Fig. 5:1]	AE 27 mm	1st–2nd century AD	Illegible Reclining figure Pierced	South Basilica, floor [Fig. 2:8]
8.	12/SSR/18	AE 32 mm	2nd–early 3rd century AD(?)	Bust r.(?) Illegible	See above, No. 1
<b>Roman Imperial</b>					
9.	7/B/18	AE 1.44 g 15.7 mm	4th century AD	Illegible Falling horseman type(?)	See above, No. 7
<b>Late Roman–Early Byzantine</b>					
10.	2/S/18	AE 1.84 g 16.2 mm	4th–5th century AD(?)	Illegible Vota(?) Pierced(?)	East of the forum, surface [Fig. 2:2]
11.	22a/B/18 [Fig. 5:4]	AE/copper 11 mm	Late 4th–early 6th century AD	Illegible Cast	See above, No. 7

Table 1. Continued

No.	Inv. no. [Fig.]	Metal Weight Diameter Die axis	Ruler Date	Obverse Reverse	Findspot
<b>Uncertain</b>					
12.	21/H21/18	AE 18 mm	Indeterminate	Illegible	House H21c, surface [Fig. 2:16]
13.	8/AEF/18	AE 4.31 g 22.5x18.7 mm	Indeterminate	Illegible (worn, obliterated)	North of the E-W street running east from the forum, sand fill [Fig. 2:4]

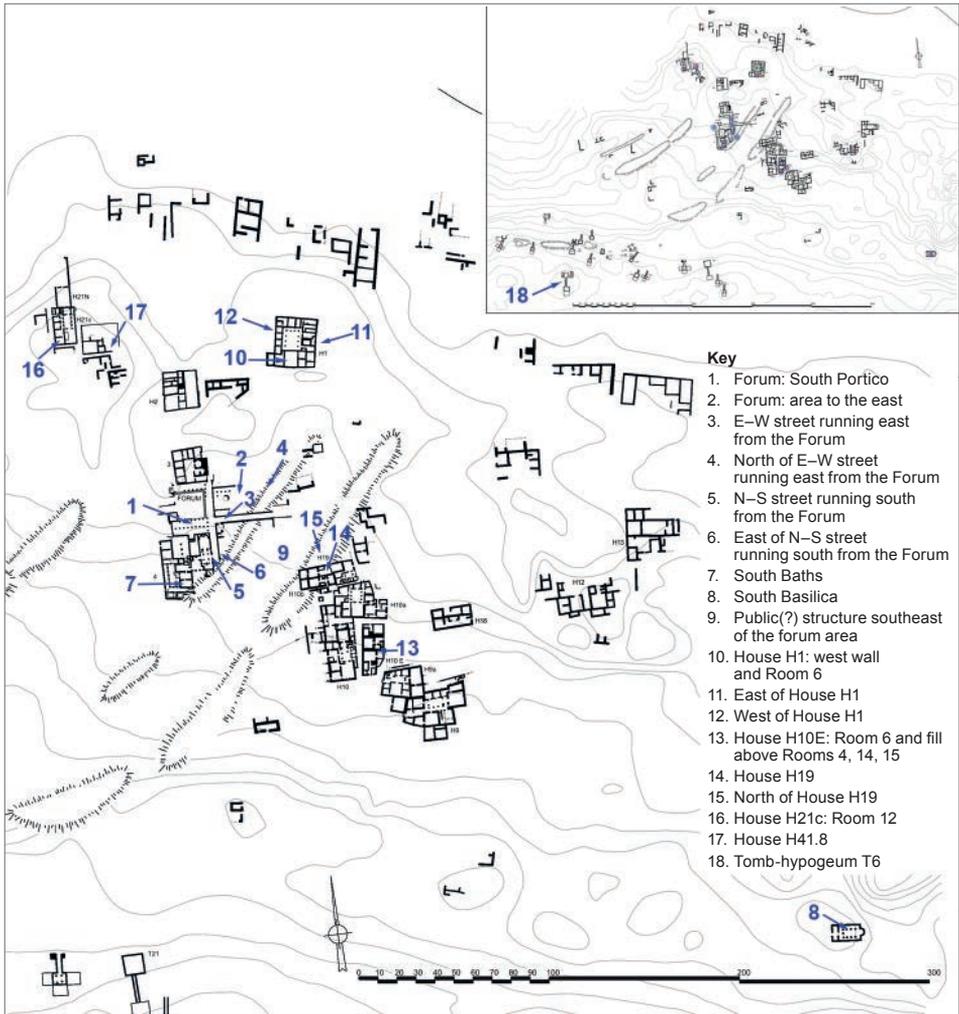


Fig. 2. Plan of the site of Marina el-Alamein indicating the findspots of coins discussed in this paper (Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission | drawing K. Majdzik, M. Krawczyk-Szczerbińska, R. Czerner)

not detected in the left field on the reverse). Minor hollows found centrally on both sides appear not to be central cavities but rather the effect of corrosion. The obverse shows a laureate head of Zeus facing right. The relatively well preserved reverse, featuring an image of an eagle with spread wings standing upon a thunderbolt, bears an inscription, only a small part of which is legible: [ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ Β] ΑΣΙΑ[ΕΩΣ]. No control mark could be detected in the left field and neither was there any symbol or letter between the eagle's legs. The oval shield in front of the eagle, typical of the coinage of Ptolemy II, should have been at least

partly visible. The coin was discovered in a small room located east of the N–S street running south from the south-eastern corner of the forum [for the location, *Fig. 2:6*] (for a discussion of the archaeological context, see Bąkowska-Czerner and Czerner 2019, in this volume). The same layer yielded also an unidentified, presumably Ptolemaic coin (Inv. 10/SSR/18; *Table 1: No. 2*), and three coins minted in Alexandria in the 1st–early 3rd century AD. Two of them (Inv. 12–13/SSR/18; *Table 1: Nos 6, 8*) are worn to the point of making an unequivocal identification impossible, while the third is a *dichalkon* attributed to Hadrian (Inv. 11/SSR/18, see below).

## HADRIAN

The two bronze Hadrian coins, a drachma and a *dichalkon*, found in 2018, add to a list of eight coins of this emperor identified in earlier seasons.

The dating of a large bronze (Inv. 67/H10E/02, Dia. 32 mm) found in Room 6 of House H10E [for the location, *Fig. 2:13*], is uncertain. The coin is worn, partly obliterated, but the flattened outline, devoid of details, of a laureate head facing right can still be traced on the obverse. The image on the reverse is of the emperor driving an elephant *quadriga* advancing to the right. The inscriptions on both sides escape identification, but one is entitled to assume that the coin comes from Hadrian's regnal year 4, an issue from AD 119/120 (*RPC III: 5235*).

A coin from the AD 127/128 issue (Inv. 103/H10E/02, Dia. about 24 mm) [*Fig. 3:3*] features a standing Demeter

wearing an Isis headdress, holding ears of corn and a long torch, L ΔΘΔΕΚ = year 12. The obverse bears a laureate bust of Hadrian facing right with a clearly legible legend ΑΥΤ ΚΑΙ ΤΡΑΙ ΑΔΡΙΑ CΕΒ (*RPC III: 5720*). The coin, one of the best preserved specimens recorded from Marina, was found in House H10E, Room 6, in a test pit by the east wall [*Fig. 2:13*] (Medeksza et al. 2003: 98).

The same archaeological context yielded another, less legible large bronze coin (Inv. 102/H10E/02, Dia. 33 mm) issued in AD 129/130 [*Fig. 3:5*]. The reverse depicts a standing Athena holding Nike in her right hand and resting her left upon a shield, L ΙΑ = year 14. The obverse shows a laureate laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of the emperor, facing right, with the legend ΑΥΤ ΚΑΙ ΤΡΑΙ ΑΔΡΙΑ CΕΒ (*RPC III: 5740*).



Fig. 3. Alexandrian mint: Hadrian 1 – AD 120/121 or 124/125; 2 – AD 124/125; 3 – AD 127/128; 4 – AD 135/136; 5 – AD 129/130; 6 – AD 130/131; 7 – AD 131/132; Antoninus Pius 8 – AD 147/148 (Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission | photos R. Czerner [1, 2, 6, 7, 8], P. Zambrzycki [3, 5] and B. Lichočka [4])

Yet another large bronze (Inv. 2H/10E/02, Dia. about 33 mm), most likely dated to AD 130/131 was found in the same house in surface layers overlying Rooms 4, 14, and 15 [for the location, *Fig. 2:13*]. The reverse features the emperor, dressed in a toga and holding a scepter, facing a personification of Alexandria bowing to kiss his raised hand (*RPC III: 5777–5779*). The inscriptions on both the obverse and reverse are obliterated [*Fig. 3:6*].

A coin (Inv. 1/S/18) discovered in 2018 on the surface north of E–W street running east from the southeastern corner of the forum is of uncertain date, presumably AD 131/132 [*Fig. 3:7*, for the findspot, see *Fig. 2:4*]. On the obverse, a laureate-headed, cuirassed and draped bust of Hadrian, facing right, is accompanied by the legend AYT KAI [T]PAI AΔPIA CEB. The reverse shows a half-naked figure of Nilus seated on rocks, with a crocodile underneath, facing left and holding a reed and a cornucopia, L I [ξ] = year 16(?) (cf. *RPC III: 5791*).

Next in chronological terms is a coin (Dia. 33 mm) bearing a distinctive reverse image identifying it as Alexandrian coinage of the kind minted under Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. The obverse shows a laureate-headed, cuirassed and draped bust of Hadrian facing right. The legend, AYT KAIC TPAIAN [AΔPIANOC CEB], is partly obliterated. The reverse depicts a winged female sphinx wearing a *polos*, seated left, resting a front paw on a wheel. The regnal year is only partly preserved, still the coin is fairly likely to have belonged to the issue dated [L I] H = year 18, AD 133/134 (*RPC III: 5915*). It is one of a few 1st–early 3rd century AD coins found during conservation

fieldwork in House H21c, Room 12 [for the location, *Fig. 2:16*] (Medeksza 2002: 103, the context also yielded coins attributed to Nero, Vespasian, Marcus Aurelius, and Caracalla, see below).

A coin (Dia. 28 mm, surface find, discovered in the early seasons of exploration at the site), showing a standing figure of Sarapis, is a reminder of the god's cult in Egypt under Roman rule. The coin is worn and partly obliterated. The obverse bears a laureate-headed bust of Hadrian facing right and the legend [AYT KAIC] TPAIA[N AΔPIANOC CEB]. The reverse features a standing deity, draped, a *kalathos* headdress on his head, a scepter in his hand and Cerberus at his feet; all the elements are compliant with a well attested and commonly known statuary type of representation. The regnal year is uncertain, being either 17 or 18, that is, AD 132/133 or 133/134 (cf. *RPC III: 5854, 5924*).

Four examples of the smallest Alexandrian denomination with anepigraphic obverses can be attributed to Hadrian, raising however incertitude about the correctness of the attribution (*RPC III: page 697*). Meriting special note is a *dichalkon* (Inv. 2/SB/11, Dia. about 17 mm; the obverse die has a diameter of about 12 mm) found in 2011 in the rubble fill of the eastern part of Room 5 of the South Baths [for the findspot, *Fig. 2:7*] (Czerner et al. 2014: 71–72, *Fig. 6a*, top left). The reverse bears a fine drawing of a lion walking right, above L E = year 5, AD 120/121 or L EN = year 9, AD 124/125 [*Fig. 3:1*] (a variant not recorded in *RPC III*). The design and execution of the animal on the Marina coin bear some similarity to the style of the Leontopolite nome coins (see *RPC III: 6471*).

Another coin unearthed along with a Ptolemaic obol (see above) in the vicinity of the forum [for the location, *Fig. 2:16*], is identified as a *dichalkon* (Inv. 11/SSR/18, *Table 1: No. 3*, obverse die, Dia. 12 mm) dated L EN = year 9, AD 124/125 [*Fig. 3:2*]. A crocodile-type reverse was quite common for small Egyptian denominations (see *RPC III: 5550*), but a variation with an additional design of a flower, presumably a lotus blossom or a bud, in the exergue seems rare or unrecorded.<sup>3</sup>

## ANTONINUS PIUS

The number of Antoninus Pius coins discovered in Marina is far lower than those attributed to Hadrian. A bronze (Dia. 28 mm, weight 11.90 g), unearthed north of the E–W street running east from the southeastern corner of the forum [for the findspot, *Fig. 2:4*], in a sand layer overlying burnt deposits, may belong to the AD 141/142 issue, being thus the earliest Antoninus Pius coin unearthed in Marina. The obverse features the emperor's portrait, facing right, wearing, most probably, a *corona radiata*, while the reverse bears a common representation of Isis Pharia holding a sail and advancing right (see *RPC IV online: 15802*). Both sides are heavily obliterated, testifying to long-time circulation and hindering an indisputable determination of the date.

The 2018 season yielded a drachma, rather worn and partly obliterated [Inv. 14/SSF/18, *Table 1: No. 5, Fig. 3:8*]. It

The collection of Hadrian coins comprises a small denomination (obverse die, Dia. about 12 mm) with a caduceus design and the date L K = year 20, AD 135/136 on the reverse (cf. *RPC III: 6128*) [*Fig. 3:4*]. Discovered during a survey of the eastern part of the city, the coin was found together with a drachma struck for Antoninus Pius showing Elpis on the reverse, as well as three other specimens (see below).

was found south of the forum, under a block of stone lying on the pavement of a street running south from the southeastern corner of the forum alongside the civic basilica [*Fig. 2:5*]. On the obverse, a portrait of the emperor facing right is clearly discernible. The reverse features a standing Elpis holding a flower and raising a fold of her dress, the date [L EN–Δ–] EKA[T]O[Y] = year 11, AD 147/148 (cf. *RPC IV online: 13617*). The same iconographic type of the reverse has been attested for an earlier recorded large bronze (Dia. 33 mm), a surface find from the district west of House H12. The obverse depicts a laureate head of Antoninus Pius facing right with the legend [AYT K T] AIA [ΔΔP] ANTΩNINOC [CΕB ΕYC], while the reverse features Elpis, regnal year L IC = year 16, AD 151/152 (*RPC IV online: 15649*). The coin was recorded in

3 A similar design in the exergue is present on a Domitian coin with Nilus on the reverse, L IB = year 12, AD 92/93, Dattari 520, type *RPC II: 2674*.

1987, along with two other Alexandrian coins, and two imperial specimens, although it is doubtful that they all came from the same context considering the time span between the youngest and the oldest issues. Apart from the Antoninus Pius bronze, the assemblage comprises: one Alexandrian coin (Dia. 19 mm), assumedly issued under Tiberius, presenting a female bust on the obverse and a bunch of ears-of-corn and poppies on the reverse (cf. *RPC I*: 5079), the above mentioned Hadrian *dichalkon* with a caduceus on the reverse, a Maximianus Herculius *folles* (Dia. 28 mm), IMP C M A MAXIMIANVS P F AVG, reverse type *Genio Populi Romani*, presenting a standing Genius

with the head turned left, holding a patera and a cornucopia (AD 294–299), and a late Roman AE4 (Dia. 12 mm) Victory type of *Salus Reipublicae* (AD 383–395).

The archaeological context of a large bronze (Dia. 33 mm) bearing a representation of Tyche reclining on a *lectisternium* decorated with garlands is not identified. The coin was found with *vota* of the Theodosius I type from the Constantinople mint (cf. *RIC IX*: Constantinople 59(b), AD 378–383) in a pot in House 9 surveyed early on during the investigation of the site. It cannot be excluded though that the coins were placed in a pot in modern times.

## LATE ROMAN–EARLY BYZANTINE PERIOD

Upon clearing the floor in the South Basilica in 2018 [for the findspot, *Fig. 2:8*], a small and severely worn late Roman coin (Inv. 7/B/18) was found between the pavement slabs. The reverse may feature one of the types belonging to the *Fel Temp Reparatio* series, the falling horseman representation, and may thus be dated to AD 348–361. If correct, the coin would count as yet another specimen of a common 4th century unit featuring this very widespread iconographic type. Two coins (Dia. 17 mm and 17.2 mm) were found on the surface in one of the villas in 1987 and yet another one (Inv. 3/H1/05) was unearthed in House H1 upon clearing the west wall [for

the location, *Fig. 2:10*] (G. Bąkowska-Czerner, personal communication).

Additionally, documentation and clearing work in the South Basilica yielded a very small, illegible counterfeit coin with casting sprues preserved (Inv. 22a/B/18, *Table 1: No. 11, Fig. 5.4*), which bears a resemblance to some coins (Dia. from 9 mm to 15 mm, Inv. 4/S/09) unearthed earlier close to House H1 on the west [for the location, *Fig. 2:12*] (identification from photograph; G. Bąkowska-Czerner, personal communication). These low-value casts were commonly used in late Roman and early Byzantine Egypt alongside the legitimate currency.<sup>4</sup>

4 On the production and circulation of these coins, see, among others, Lichočka 1990; Noeske 2000; Ratzan 2019: 456–458.

## PENDANTS

A coin escaping explicit identification, is Inv. 22b/B/18 [Table 1: No. 7], although some features may point to an Alexandrian mint issue of the 1st–2nd century AD [Fig. 4:1]. Both flat sides are worn and covered with a green layer of oxidation. On the reverse, a figure reclining left is probably Nilus or his spouse Euthenia. The coin is pierced at its edge, which indicates that it was used as a pendant. The change of functionality could have taken place once the coin had become obsolete; however, it is hard to tell whether it reached Marina as a means of payment or already as an ornament. The coin was found while clearing the paved floors of the South Basilica [for the findspot, Fig. 2:8].

The practice of coin piercing is attested also by a coin of Constans recorded during conservation activities in House H1, Room 6 [for the findspot, Fig. 2:10] (G. Bąkowska-Czerner, personal communication). It bears the reverse legend of *Fel Temp Reparatio* and a representation of the emperor holding Phoenix on a globe and standard, standing on a galley guided by Victory, dated to

AD 348–350 (Inv. 82/H1/05; cf. *RIC VIII* : Cyzicus 66) [Fig. 4:2]. Another late Roman coin (Inv. 2/S/18, Table 1: No. 10), found in 2018 on the surface east of the forum [Fig. 4:2], may have also been pierced. The sides of the coin and the edge are damaged.



Fig. 4. Pierced coins: 1 – Roman provincial Alexandrian mint, 1st–2nd century AD; 2 – Imperial mint Cyzicus, Constans, AD 348–350 (Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission | photos R. Czerner)

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Finds resulting from just one season of conservation in the field are perforce insufficient grounds for binding conclusions. However, in conjunction with a comprehensive overview of all the available documentation and a study of earlier coin finds from both archaeological and conservation fieldwork, they justify some provisional observations.

Dating coins by the emperor's regnal year, typical in the case of Alexandrian issues, enables a chronological ordering,

even if the currency influx need not have followed the issue order. Specimens minted in various years might have circulated simultaneously, sometimes for long periods of time. Most of them are severely worn, the images having been all but obliterated, indicating extensive use in daily commerce. The time span between the issue and the misplacing is hard to determine.

Some coins are relatively well preserved like, for example, a large bronze of Claudius with a bunch of six ears of corn

on the reverse, ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑ, L B = year 2, AD 41/42 (Inv. 1/S/04; RPC II: 6123), found north of House 19 [for the location, *Fig. 2:15*]. The above mentioned coin struck under Vespasian, year 9, with a portrait of Titus on the reverse is another example of coinage in circulation in Egypt under Roman rule. A coin of Trajan with the emperor-in-a-*quadriga* reverse type, year 14 (see above) and a coin of Hadrian with the standing-Demeter reverse type, year 12 (see above), with clearly legible date of issue (see above), illustrate well-known types of Alexandrian coinage as well.

Two worn and obliterated coins that can be attributed to either Trajan and/or Hadrian are a source of valuable information; one, showing Euthenia (Inv. 47/01, Dia. 33.4 mm, weight 17.22 g), was found on the pavement east of the forum, the other, with traces of a *quadriga* design (Inv. 49A/01, Dia. 33 mm) on the pavement in the south portico of the forum [for the location, respectively *Fig. 2:2* and 1]. There is additionally a large bronze (Jakubiak 2016: 137–138, *Fig. 11:g*, attributed to the 1st century AD) found with a billon tetradrachm of Maximinus Trax in House H41.8 (see below).

The detailed iconography of three, most likely Domitian coins unearthed in the south portico of the forum in 2001 [*Fig. 2:1*] (Inv. 28/01; see Daszewski 2002: 86) and in House 19, Room 23 during conservation works conducted in 2004 (Agathodaimon-serpent reverse type, Inv. 68/H19/04, Dia. 22 mm, weight 9.40 g) [for the findspot, *Fig. 2:14*], and on a floor

in Tomb-hypogeum 6, Room 3 [for the findspot, *Fig. 2:18*] (Daszewski 2001: 56) can be discussed.

One of the most interesting finds is a halved coin (Dia. 29 mm, weight 6.45 g) registered during the survey in 1987. Both sides are illegible, but characteristic features suggest Alexandrian minting of the 1st–2nd century AD. It cannot be excluded that the coin had left Egypt in some way, was halved in the neighboring province of Cyrenaica where the practice of cutting coins seems to be well-established, and then returned to Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

Few Ptolemaic specimens have so far been identified at Marina. Among others, there is a partly damaged obol from the South Baths [for the findspot, *Fig. 2:7*], showing on the obverse the head of Alexander the Great wearing an elephant-scalp headdress and on the reverse an eagle with spread wings standing left, [ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ] ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩ[Σ] (Inv. 16/SB/17, Dia. 19 mm, weight 5.61 g). The type was identified as Series 3 and dated to 261–about 240 BC (Picard and Faucher 2012: 41–42, Nos 241–282) [see *Fig. 1:2*].

Indeed, the Roman provincial coinage struck in Alexandria appears more numerous, with a prominent, recurrent appearance of coins of Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Trajan. Alexandrian issues of the 3rd-century are not substantial in number. One of the billon tetradrachms (Inv. 2/SB/15, Dia. 24 mm, weight 6.4 g, worn; G. Bąkowska-Czerner, personal communication) was found in the South Baths [for the location, *Fig. 2:7*], another

5 A great many halved coins issued by various mints, including Alexandria, was found in Ptolemais, see Jaworski 2011: 31, No. 47, 32, Pl. 1.10; 2013: 212, 228, No. 45, 235, 241.

one on the floor of House H41.8 [for the location, *Fig. 2:17*] attributed to Antoninus Pius, with “the River Tiber on the reverse” (Jakubiak 2016: 137–138, *Fig. 11h*), although both the portrait and the legend, AYTO MAΞIMINOC EYCEB (reading based on a photograph), suggest rather an attribution to Maximinus Trax, AD 235–238, assumedly Nilus on the reverse (cf. Geissen III: 2559, 2573).

The closed currency system, in force in Egypt until Diocletian’s currency reforms (AD 294–296), was fairly effective in barring the influx of foreign currency, therefore the actual absence of coins of foreign provenience is not at all surprising. Only one bronze specimen from the Judaean Kingdom has been identified so far; it was struck in Jerusalem during the rule of the Roman procurators and bears the name of Nero within a wreath. It was found in House H19, Room 4 [for the findspot, *Fig. 2:14*], where one of two imperial coins from times prior to the Diocletian reforms, struck most probably under Caracalla, was also discovered (Medeksza 2002: 103; see above). The other coin has been identified as an antoninianus of Numerianus (AD 283–284; Dia. 21 mm), of the IOVI VICTORI, Jupiter-holding-Victory reverse type, found on the surface (cf. *RIC V*, 2: Rome 410; I. Zych, personal communication, 1990).<sup>6</sup>

Some 20% of the coin finds, demonstrating a varying degree of weathering and legibility, would attest to the influx of Roman imperial coinage after the Diocletian reforms. A few specimens collected, among others, in the South Basilica, Houses H1 and H41, are direct evidence of city life

in late antiquity. In addition to the coins already described, Room 8b of the South Baths yielded a *folles* struck for Maximinus II Daia, Caesar (AD 305–308), GAL VAL MAXIMINVS NOB CAES with *Virtus Exercitus* reverse type, showing Mars walking right (Inv. SB/11; see Czerner et al. 2014: 74). The *folles* of Constantine I Augustus, dated to AD 317–320, was a surface find from the area west of House H1 [*Fig. 2:12*] (Inv. 2/S/16, Dia. 20 mm, weight 2.35 g). The obverse bears the emperor’s bust facing left with the legend IMP CONSTA–NTINVS AVG (double struck?) and the reverse (poor state of preservation) depicting a standing Jupiter, *Iovi Conservatori Augg.*, AD 317–320 (Inv. 2/S/16; cf. *RIC VIII*, all mints; see Czerner et al. 2017: 93) [*Fig. 5:1*]. Coinage dating from the years of the reign of Constantine’s sons is represented by a surface find featuring on the obverse a bust of Rome, VRBS ROMA, and on the reverse a she-wolf suckling the twins Romulus and Remus, two stars above, in exergue SMALA, AD 337–340 (Inv. 5/S/09, Dia. 18 mm; cf. *RIC VIII: Alexandria 10*) [*Fig. 5:3*]. It is a specimen of the same type as the one mentioned above, found between the forum and House H1.

Some coins belong to the *Gloria Exercitus* type showing two standing soldiers in two variations, at first with two standards, AD 330–335, and this is represented by a coin from the South Bath, Room 4 (Inv. 8/PW/09; *RIC VII: Alexandria 59*; AD 333–335; Medeksza et al. 2012: 92) [*Fig. 5:2*]. A later variant, AD 335–337, with one standard, is represented by coins found in the forum (early in the project) and in the vicinity of House H1, probably

6 For the presence of imperial currency in Egypt, see Christiansen 2003: 42–45; Burnett 2005: 263–264.



Fig. 5. Late Roman imperial coins: 1 – AD 317–320; 2 – AD 330–335; 3 – AD 337–before April 340, 4 – casts, late 4th–early 6th century AD (Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission | photos R. Czerner [1, 4], P. Zambrzycki [2,3])

west of it [Fig. 2:12] (Inv. 3/S/16; see Czerner et al. 2017: 93).

In addition, the late Roman period is represented by a relatively well preserved Valens AE3 coin with the reverse type *Gloria Romanorum* showing the emperor

in military dress holding a standard in the left hand and dragging a captive behind him, AD 364–375 (cf. *RIC IX: Nicomedia* 9(c), found in 1987). Several AE4 coins of the *Salus Reipublicae* type, representing Victory advancing left and dragging a captive reached the town as well. They were found both in the course of the early survey as well as during the excavation and conservation work (Inv. 23/S/04, surface find east of House 1 [Fig. 2:11]; see above). Two specimens bearing the name of Arcadius were struck in one of Eastern mints (Nicomedia, Antiochia or Alexandria) in AD 388–395 (cf. *RIC IX: Nicomedia* 45[c]; *Antiochia* 67[d], 70[c]; *Alexandria* 20[c], 23[c]).

On the grounds of this preliminary survey, it may be concluded that coins issued from the 1st through the 2nd centuries AD make up roughly 50% of all the coin finds in 2018 as well as of the total volume of collected coins. They would have been used by city dwellers as well as visitors to the town. Whether this would testify to a flourishing of the ancient town at the site of Marina el-Alamein during this period, as hypothesized by Daszewski (1997: 81), is still to be confirmed by further studies.<sup>7</sup>

#### Prof. Barbara Lichočka

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1437-9256>

Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures  
Polish Academy of Sciences  
00-000 Warsaw, Nowy Świat 72  
[blichocka@iksio.pan.pl](mailto:blichocka@iksio.pan.pl)

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<sup>7</sup> A thorough and comprehensive presentation of the coins found in Marina el-Alamein, deposited in various storage facilities there, is a challenge due to reports seldom giving inventory numbers and surface finds sometimes lacking identification whatsoever. Therefore, a comprehensive documentation, full cleaning and reading from autopsy of all the specimens seem fairly imperative.

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