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## Bronze Jewellery from Marina El-Alamein

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# BRONZE JEWELRY FROM MARINA EL-ALAMEIN

Grażyna Bąkowska

Bronze jewelry, found in recent excavations at Marina el-Alamein (seasons 2002-2004), is presented in this provisional report<sup>1</sup> in recognition of its complementary role in any study of the customs, traditions and beliefs of a given community and the

potential image it gives of cultural relations and influences at the site. Most of these objects were recorded in sound archaeological contexts, although some surface finds have been included as well.

## CATALOGUE

### 1. Ring with bust of Sarapis [Figs. 1, 2]

Inv. no. 106/H10"E"/02)

House H10"E", room 4 (contextual dating to the 1st-3rd centuries AD)<sup>2</sup>

Dia. 2.6/2.5 cm (inner 1.8/1.5 cm); H. of bust 2.3 cm

Ring band slightly convex on outside, widening towards the bust of Sarapis, which is executed in high relief. The deity is clad in a *chiton* and *himation* and has a *modius* on his head. Locks of hair descend to the shoulders. The beard and moustache are clearly marked, as are the facial features. The bust stands on a small base.

Good state of preservation.

Dated to the 1st-2nd century AD.

Published: *PAM XIV, Reports 2002* (2003), 97, Fig. 10.

Parallels: F.H. Marshal, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the Departments of Antiquities, British Museum* (London 1907), 178, 204, Pl. XXVIII, no. 1122; XXXI, nos. 1301-1302.

### 2. Ring with presumed bust of Sarapis-Amon [Fig. 2]

Inv. no. 10/S/03

Surface find

Dia. 1.9 cm (inner 1.6 cm); H. of bust 1.1 cm

Band widens toward bust of Sarapis-Amon.

Bust rounded off in semicircular fashion.

Small *modius* on head, ram's horns marked on either side.

Severely damaged, band incomplete; Sarapis image blurred.

Dated to the 1st-2nd century AD.

1 By kind permission of Prof. Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski and Prof. Stanisław Medeksza, heads of the Polish Centre's archaeological and restoration missions respectively, and with deepfelt thanks to Mr. Abdel Latif el-Wakil for inspiration to study this category of finds. For excavation work on the site in 2002-2004 and earlier, see interim reports by W.A. Daszewski and S. Medeksza in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, volumes from 1989 until the present).

2 All contextual pottery dates kindly provided by Dr. Grzegorz Majcherek.

Parallels: G. Grimm, "Ein Kopf des Ammon-Sarapis aus Elephantine", *MDAIK* 28 (1972), 141-144 and J. Śliwa, "Egyptian scarabs and magical gems from the Collection of Constantine Schmidt-Ciążyński," *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego CMXVII* (1989) 69-70, no. 89; rounded bust of Sarapis: S. Hodjash, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery. Catalogue. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow 2001)*, 81, no. 576.

### 3. Ring [Fig. 2]

Inv. no. 50/H19/04

House 19, room 22

Dia. 2.5 cm (inner 1.7 cm); H. of bust 1 cm

Thick band narrowing toward nondescript image (possibly lion<sup>3</sup>).

Severely damaged, band cracked and broken. Ornament strongly worn and seriously corroded.

Dated to the 1st-3rd century AD.

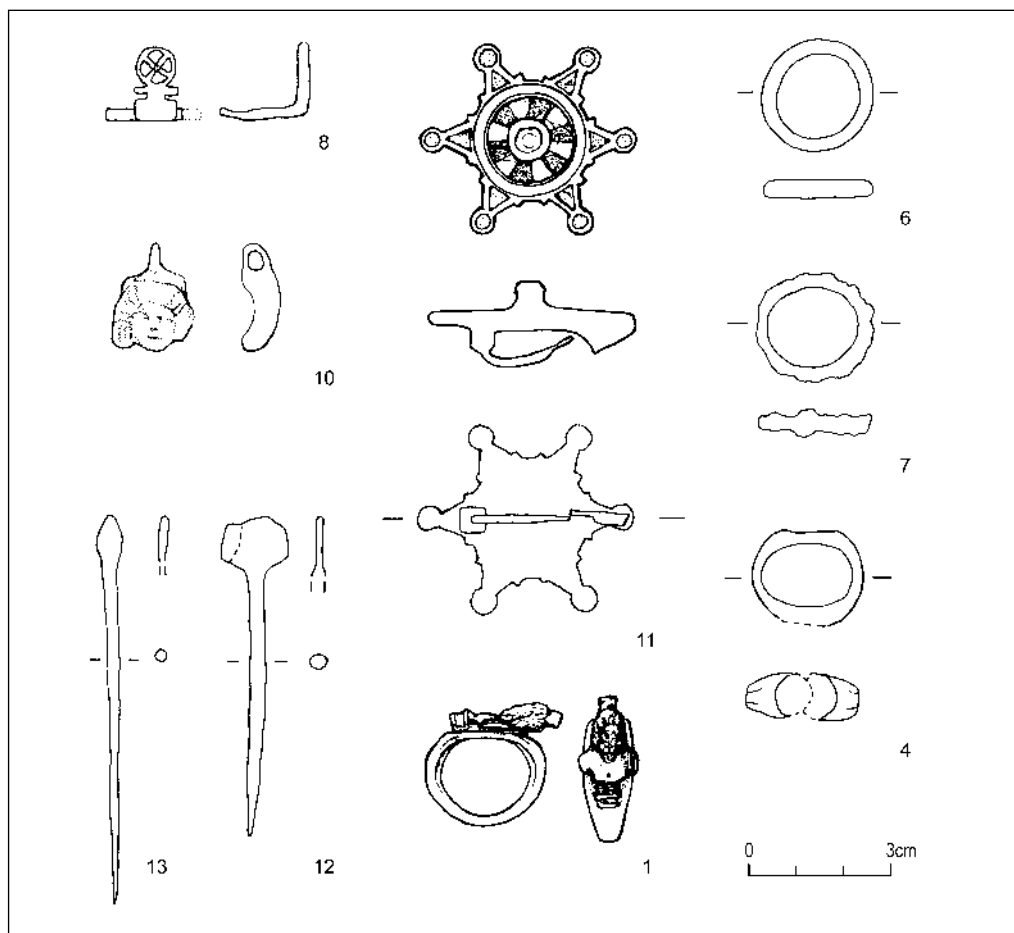


Fig. 1. Bronze jewelry from Marina el-Alamein. Numbers refer to items in the catalogue (Drawing G. Bąkowska, M. Ujma; 4 - I. Zych, A. Błaszczuk)

3 Similar lion figure on a silver plated bronze armlet, cf. F.H. Marshal, *Catalogue of the Jewellery, Greek, Etruscan, Roman in the Department of Antiquities (London 1911)*, 126-127, nos. 1368, 1369.

4. **Ring with empty bezel** [Fig. 1]

Inv. no. 14/H10"E"/02

House H10"E", room 15 (contextual dating to end of 1st/2nd century AD)

Dia. 2.4 cm/2cm (inner 1.9 x 1.3 cm); bezel 1.3 x 1 cm

Shoulders widening slightly toward bezel.

Decorated with two cut lines, which draw apart as they approach the oval bezel. Glass bead or gem could have been mounted in the shallow bezel (1.17-0.22 cm).

Cracked along the bezel, heavily corroded.

Dated to the 2nd century AD.

Parallels: Marshal 1907, op. cit., Pl. XXIX, no. 1188; XXXII, no. 1399.

Bezel: W. 1.1 cm. Glass gem: top 1 x 0.8 cm; bottom 0.8 x 0.6 cm, Th. 0.15-0.2 cm

Fragment of ring with oval bezel. Green glass gem, engraved with faint lines on the top.

Partly preserved, heavily corroded surface. Damaged gem.

Dated to the 1st-2nd century AD.

For parallels, see cat. no. 4 above.

6. **Ring band** [Fig. 1]

Inv. no. 15/H10"E"/02

House H10"E", room 15 (contextual dating to 1st and 2nd centuries AD)

Dia. 2.4 cm (inner 1.7 cm)

Outer band surface convex, thicker in places, flat inside and sides.

Good state of preservation.

Dated to the 2nd century AD.

Parallels: F. Henkel, *Die römischen Fingerlinge der Rheinlande und der benachbarten Gebiete* (Berlin 1913), vol. I, nos. 1-3;5. **Fragment of ring with bezel**

Inv. no. III-21/04

Main town square, east of South Portico, room 1 (contextual dating to end of 1st/early 2nd century AD)

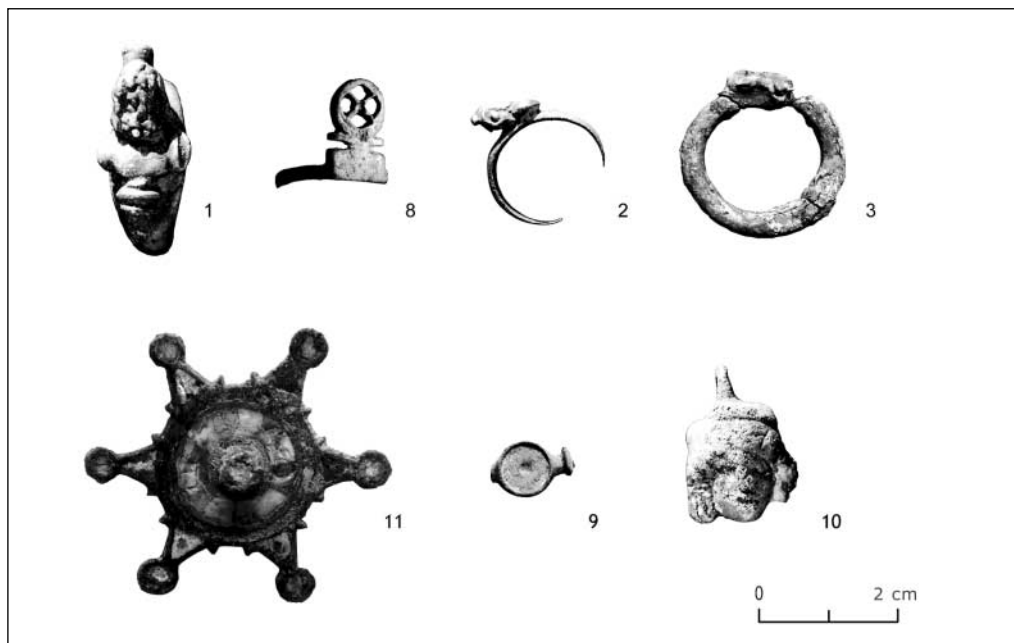


Fig. 2. *Bronze jewelry from Marina el-Alamein. Numbers refer to items in the catalogue (Photo W. Grzegorek (2,8); all others P. Zambrzycki)*

G. Fogolari, G. Gambacurta (eds.), *Materiali veneti preromani e romani del santuario di Lagole di Calalzo al Museo di Pieve di Cadore* (Roma 2001), 22, 314-346.

7. **Ring band** [*Fig. 1*]

Inv. no. 20/H10"E"/02

House H10"E", room 15 (contextual dating to end of 1st/2nd century AD)

Dia. 2.4 cm (inner 1.9 cm)

Band consisting of a number of thin wires tightly twisted together, forming irregular outer surface.

Heavily corroded all over.

Dated to the 2nd century AD.

8. **Ring or earring with circular ornament** [*Figs. 1, 2*]

Inv. no. 11/S/03

Surface find.

Dia. c. 2 cm; H. of ornament 1.6 cm; dia. 0.9 cm

Circular ornament in front with two lines crossing in the middle, the intersection marked by a tiny bezel (dia. 0.1 cm). Base below ornament, parallel to band (L. 1 cm, Th. 0.15 cm); second one 0.14 cm further down, same length but thicker (0.4 cm).

Half of band preserved, gem missing from bezel.

Dated to the 1st-3rd century AD.

Parallels: V. Sarianidi, *Bactrian Gold from the Excavations of the Tillya-Tepe Necropolis in Northern Afghanistan* (Leningrad 1985), 252, no. 2, Ill. 33. For the circular motif in jewelry, cf. H. Hoffmann, *Greek Gold Jewelry from the Age of Alexander* (New York 1966), 144, Fig. 51A; *Die Alamannen* (Stuttgart 1997), 187, no. 194, 462, no. 529.

9. **Fragment of pendant** [*Fig. 2*]

Inv. no. 60/H19/04

House 10"E", room 6

Dia. of circle 0.78 cm, L. pres. 1.2 cm

Necklace fragment featuring round bezel. Slightly convex back suggests pendant. Not a ring. Glass bead presumably mounted in shallow bezel (0.1 cm deep).

Damaged, but bezel in fairly good condition.

Dated to the 1st-2nd century AD.

Parallels: S.M. Ruxer, J. Kubiak, *Naszyjnik grecki w okresie hellenistycznym i rzymskim* (Warszawa 1972), 117, Fig. 17 and Pls. V, XXII, LXIV, LXV; for a similar image of a ring, cf. M. Guisan, "Bijoux romains d'Avenches", *Bulletin de l'Association Pro Aventico* 23 (1975) 14, Pl. 3, no. 1.28.

10. **Pendant** [*Figs. 1, 2*]

Inv. no. 71/H10"E"/02

House 10"E", room 15 (contextual dating to 1st-2nd century AD)

H. 2.4 cm, W. 1.7 cm

Presumably female face rendered with thick hair and a cap slightly askew with raised tip serving as pendant mounting, the hole (Dia. 0.3 cm) pierced through it perpendicular to face. Indistinct facial features. Back side of pendant slightly concave. Similar images can be found on appliqué<sup>4</sup>. Heavily worn surface, evident traces of corrosion.

Dated to the 1st-2nd century AD.

Parallels: K. Schumacher, *Beschreibung der Sammlung antiker Bronzen* (Karlsruhe 1890), 60, Pl. III, no. 20; M. Bieber, *Die antiken Skulpturen und Bronzen Königlichen Museum Fridericianum in Cassel* (Marburg 1915), 92, no. 414; S. Hodjash, *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery. Catalogue*. Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow 2001), 74, no. 507.

11. **Fibula** [*Figs. 1, 2*]

Inv. no. 40/H10"E"/02

4 L. Mercado, E. Zanda, *Bronzi da Industria* (Roma 1998), 136-137, Pl. XCI, no. 195.

House 10"E", room 15 (contextual dating to 1st-2nd century AD)

Dia. 4.6 cm

Enameled fibula in the form of a six-arm star. Each triangular arm terminates in a circle. Enamel preserved in the triangles and circles, alternately cream and turquoise in color. Center of star also filled with enamel. In the very center, a small boss (H. 0.5 cm), possibly decorated with cream-colored enamel. Back smooth. Fastening: pin length 2.1 cm, arch 1.2 cm. Object refers to fibulae of type 27b 1 in J. Philippe's typology.

Enamel missing in places, pin broken, but otherwise in good condition.

Dated to second half of the 2nd century AD. Published: *PAM XIV, Reports 2002* (2003), 97, Fig. 9.

Parallels: E. Riha, *Die römischen Fibeln aus Augst und Kaiseraugst. Die Neufunde seit 1975, Forschungen in Augst 18* (1994), vol. 42, no. 2827, vol. 46, no. 2925; L. Endrizzi, F. Marzatico (eds), *Ori delle Alpi* (Trento 1997), 481, Fig. 93, nos. 1067-71; A. Mazur, *Les fibules romaines d'Avenches I, Bulletin de l'Association Pro Aventico 40* (1998), 61, no. 346, Pls. 28 and 1, no. 7.27; J. Philippe, *Les fibules de Seine-et-Marne du 1er siècle av. J.-C. au 5e siècle ap. J.-C., Mém. archéol. Seine-et-Marne n°1* (Nemours 1999), 164, no. 521.

12. **Pin** [Fig. 1]

Inv. no. 16/H10"E"/02

House 10"E", room 15 (contextual dating to end of 1st/2nd century AD)

L. 6.7 cm; Dia. 0.3 cm

Thin flat head of trapezoid shape (1.4 cm wide at bottom, 1.2 cm at top, 0.1-0.2 cm thick). Oval-sectioned shaft (Dia. 0.3 cm) narrowing to sharp tip.

Corroded surface, cracked in the middle; head cracked, too.

Dated to the 2nd century AD.

Parallels: Guisan, *op. cit.*, Pl. 17, no. 45; B. Beckmann, *Studien über die Metallnadeln der römischen Kaiserzeit in frein Germanien, Saalburg Jahrbuch XXIII* (1966), 1-105.

13. **Pin** [Fig. 1]

Inv. no. 18/H10"E"/02

House 10"E", room 15 (contextual dating to end of 1st/2nd century AD)

L. 8.1 cm; Dia. 0.3 cm

Round-sectioned shaft (Dia. 0.3 cm at head, 0.2 cm below), narrowing to sharp tip. Oval head, 0.5 cm at the widest, flattened to 0.2 cm in thickness.

Fairly good condition with only slight evidence of corrosion.

Dated to the 2nd century AD.

Parallels: See cat. no. 12 above and Guisan, *op. cit.*, 32, Pl. 16, no. 21.

## COMMENTARY

The finds of jewelry appear to have been grouped in room 15 of House H10"E" (eight of the items), the remaining pieces coming from another house and from a room off the main town square. Two objects were surface finds. Apart from the latter two items, all the finds have been dated contextually (assemblages included

pottery, coins, lamps), as well as by comparison with published parallels.

Some of the objects appear to be unique, but the majority are typical of Mediterranean culture.

The Sarapis ring (cat. no. 1 above), when viewed in context of other representations of the god known from the Marina el-Alamein

excavations,<sup>5</sup> could indicate the widespread cult of this deity in Marina. The god depicted as Sarapis-Amon<sup>6</sup> (cat. no. 2 above) may have been connected with the locally popular worship of Amon, whose temple was found in Siwa Oasis, for example.<sup>7</sup> Images of Sarapis with ram's horns and *modius* were found on Elephantine, where the ram-headed Chnum was worshipped.<sup>8</sup> Zeus-Amon was also represented with ram's horns; the image is frequent on the coins of Vespasian and Trajan among others,<sup>9</sup> and of neighboring Cyrenaica.<sup>10</sup>

The ring or earring with round ornament refers to the goddess Nemesis, who was often depicted in the first centuries

AD as a griffin placing one paw on a wheel or globe, and interpreted as a symbol of power over destiny.<sup>11</sup> The said motif of a wheel could also refer to Egyptian symbols.<sup>12</sup> The enameled brooch immediately brings to mind a wealth of such fibulae found in Gaul and the Rhineland.<sup>13</sup> Obviously the piece must have made its way to Marina in the effect of overseas contacts of the local residents, hardly surprising considering the thriving harbor town that Marina must have been.

More work on the material as well as future finds could further contribute to studies of various aspects of everyday life in Marina el-Alamein.

- 5 W.A. Daszewski, "The gods of the north-west coast of Egypt in the Graeco-Roman period", *MEFRA* 103 (1991), 91-104; S. Medeksza, "Marina el-Alamein grecko-rzymskie miasto w Egipcie. Badania architektoniczno-urbanistyczne i restauracja relikwów architektury mieszkalnej", in: *Conservatio est aeterna creatio*. Księga dedykowana Prof. J. Tajchmanowi (Toruń 1999), 130-131; I. Zych, "Marina El-Alamein. Some ancient terracotta lamps from Marina", *PAM XV, Reports 2003* (2004), 83-85.
- 6 On the subject of Sarapis-Amon, see also J.E. Stambaugh, "Sarapis under the early Ptolemies", *EPRO* 25 (Leiden 1972), 85; W. Hornbostel, "Sarapis", *EPRO* 32 (Leiden 1973), 22, no. 198.
- 7 More on this subject in Daszewski, "The gods", op. cit., 94-95; on Sarapis-Amon, see also Stambaugh, loc. cit.
- 8 Grimm, op. cit., 144, Pl. XXXb.
- 9 E.g. Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Danish National Museum, vol. 1 (Copenhagen 1942), nos. 148 and 149.
- 10 E.g. C.M. Kraay, *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (London 1976), 296-297.
- 11 M. Abbiati Brida in: E.A. Arslan, *Iside. Il mito il mistero la magia* (Milano 1997), 227 (relief thought to be from Alexandria); see also B. Lichocka, *L'iconographie de Fortuna dans l'Empire Romain* (Varsovie 1997), 195, 225, i.a. nos. 145, 162, 514.
- 12 The wheel decorating this piece of jewelry recalls the *shen* sig, cf. R.H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art* (London 1992); it could also be referred to the Egyptian sign for the universe, an X in a circle (L. Kákosy, "Iside. Magia, astrologia, alchimia", in: Arslan, *Iside*, op. cit., 147).
- 13 They were common in eastern Gaul and in lands on the Rhine, where they are dated to the second half of the 2nd century AD, cf. Philippe, loc.cit. See also P. Kaczanowski, J. Rodzińska-Nowak, *Provinzialrömische emailierte Scheibenfibel aus der Siedlung der Przeworsk-Kultur in Jakuszowice*, *Sborník Národního Muzea v Praze*, Ser. A, LI (2000), 57-62.