

# The peristyle of House H1 in the ancient town at Marina el-Alamein

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The house designated as H1 is situated in the northern part of the ancient town at Marina el-Alamein, near the lagoon wharf and port buildings [Fig. 1]. This is one of the biggest and the most extended houses discovered to date at the excavation site; at the same time, its layout is exceptionally regular. In the 3rd and 4th century AD, its

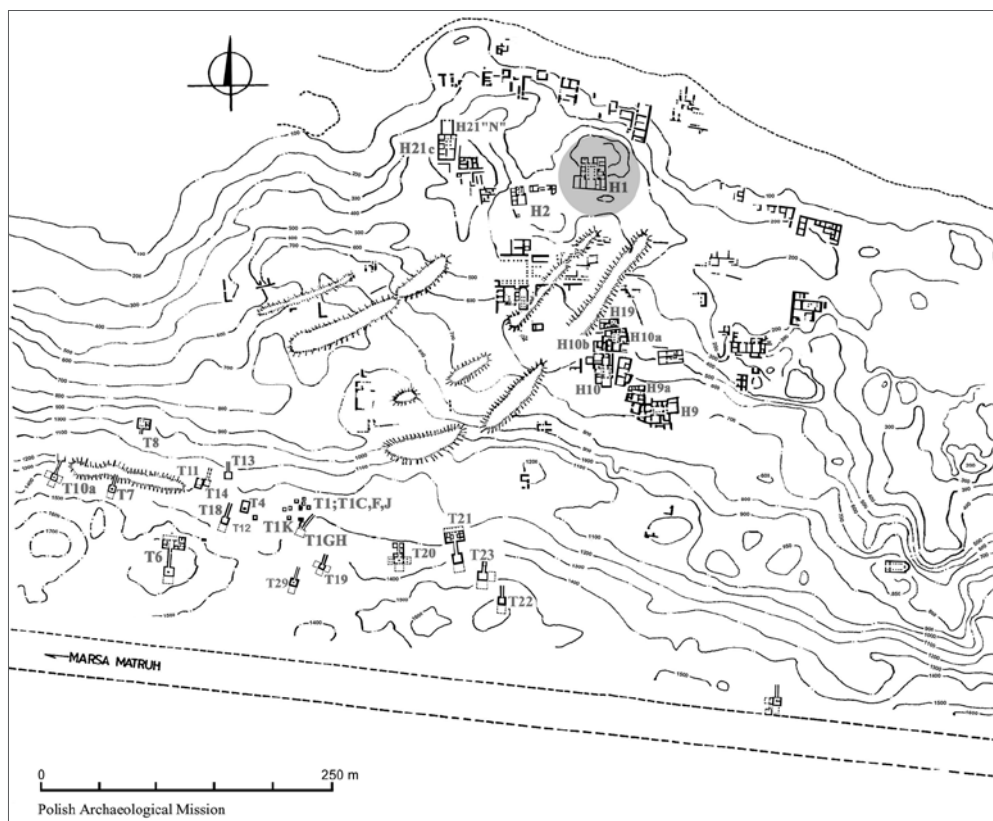


Fig. 1. Plan of the excavation site at Marina el-Alamein, with the position of House H1 and the findspots of architectural elements discussed in the article (PCMA mission archives)

best preserved part without extensions, i.e., the basic structure formed almost a square measuring 22.23–22.33 m from east to west and 27–27.95 m from north to south. In its central part, there was a spacious, quadrangular inner courtyard slightly elongated from north to south and sized 10.40 by 12.80 m. Its proportions fit in the range of the proportions of the basic structure. The courtyard is positioned slightly northwest off centre [Fig. 2]. The house exemplifies a purely axial composition and spatial treatment.

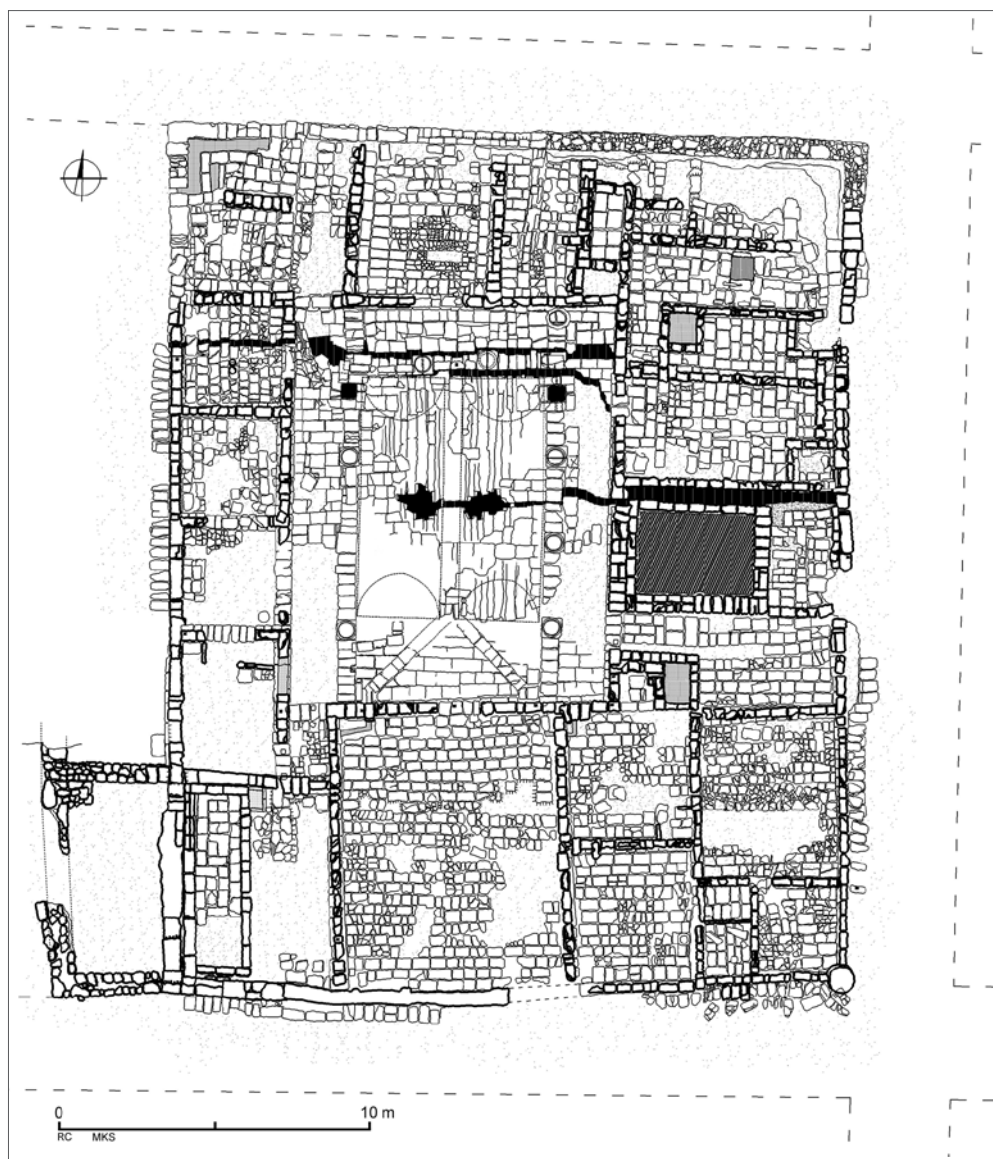


Fig. 2. Plan of House H1 (Drawing R. Czerner, M. Krawczyk-Szczerbińska)

Although shifted west, there is only one main axis, which runs through the entrance with vestibule, the courtyard and the main hall. It is a line of symmetry for all these elements. Many of the rooms surrounding the courtyard are untypical and their purpose is not fully understood. This is why the functional layout of the building remains only partly known.

The monumental character expressed in large scale and spatial regularity, as well as functional solutions not found in other houses, make House H1 one of the most interesting in terms of research. It is the more remarkable as one of the few houses where also relics of structures from a much earlier stage, perhaps even from the 1st century BC, have survived, as well as copious evidence of reuse of the partly collapsed building after the 5th century.

After the house was discovered in 1986 by inspectors from the Alexandrine branch of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization (today the Supreme Council of Antiquities, see Daszewski 1990a: 17–18; 1990b: 110), Krzysztof Kamiński drew its schematic plan in 1987 (Bentkowski *et alii* 1988: 3, Fig. 1). Nine years later, Ewa Łużyniecka from the Polish–Egyptian Conservation Mission presented the first reconstruction of the functional and spatial layout of the house, and phasing into two stages (Łużyniecka 1998: 28–35). The Mission continued its research and conservation work during four seasons between 2006 and 2009. Archaeological research aimed at preparation for conservation and architectural interpretation of the remains has been continued until today. The results have been presented in successive reports from 2007 to 2009 (Medeksza *et alii* 2007–2009, unpublished annual reports in PCMA archives; Medeksza *et alii* 2010; Medeksza *et alii*, forthcoming).

Similarly to the whole house, the stately central courtyard is extremely regular in terms of the composition. On three sides, i.e., on the northern, eastern and western side, it was surrounded by porticoes. On the fourth, southern side, in a high wall without a portico there were three doorways leading to the main hall. The middle entrance was extremely wide, that is, as much as 2.21 m. The two symmetrically positioned lateral entrances were considerably narrower, about 0.90 m in width. Entrances to the other rooms were concealed in the porticoes. Among them, in the western portico, on the axis of the second intercolumniation from the south, there is an entrance opening in the wall, almost as wide as the intercolumniation, leading to a regular square room, perhaps an exedra, with identical wide entrances from the north and from the south. Apart from the doors leading to the courtyard from the entrance vestibule, which were placed almost in the centre of the north wall, the entrances in the porticoes were not arranged regularly.

In contrast, the arrangement of porticoes and their supports was very regular. Surrounded by porticoes on three sides, the courtyard was an incomplete peristyle.<sup>1</sup> So far, it is the only courtyard with such a developed layout discovered at the excavation site in Marina. The peristyle was composed mostly of columns, however in the corners there were combined pillars consisting of a square pillar and two engaged columns, which

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<sup>1</sup> A complete peristyle is surrounded by porticoes on all four sides.

marked the beginnings of the portico colonnades. Such pillars are called ‘heart-shaped’ because of their distinctive plan. It is the only example of the use of this type of pillar in Marina. The middle, northern portico was three-spanned with two columns between corner pillars; the lateral porticoes, that is the eastern and western one, with four intercolumniations, apart from the corner pillars were also supported by three columns each. Their southernmost spans did not end with supports, but they reached the south wall of the courtyard. Most of the support bases have survived *in situ*. The diameter of the

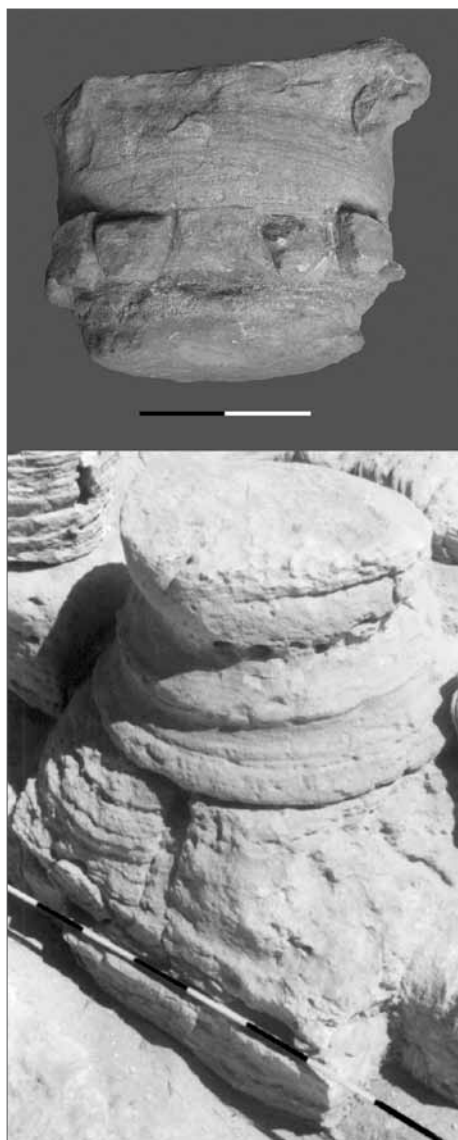


Fig. 4a–b. Small bases with Attic profile from a column (top) and from a ‘heart-shaped’ pillar from the peristyle of House H1 (Photo R. Czerner)

Fig. 3a–b. Marina-type pseudo-Corinthian capital (top) and column base with Attic profile from the peristyle of House H1 (Photos R. Czerner)

column and engaged column shafts was 45 cm above the base, whereas the intercolumniations had various sizes. In the lateral porticoes they were considerable: 2.25–2.30 m, which means that they equaled about five shaft diameters. The intercolumniations in the central northern portico were much smaller with about 1.58 m, corresponding to 3.5 column diameters. However, the size of spacing between columns on this side was secondary to the composition which required three spans with a central passage to the vestibule doors.

Apart from the bases, which have survived undisturbed, excavations have revealed, preserved in various conditions, four capitals, a small number of tambours forming column shafts, and fragments of pillars. A number of stone cornices' parts corresponding with them in size was also found. All these elements belonged to the pseudo-Corinthian order of the 'Marina type'.<sup>2</sup> Its most distinctive feature here is the form of a geometrically stylized pseudo-Corinthian capital characteristic of Marina [Fig. 3, top], whereas the use of Attic bases with a correct profile which were neither simplified nor stylized was untypical of this order and quite unusual in Marina [Fig. 3, bottom]. It is another feature demonstrating the stately character of this house.

At the site of House H1, some elements of columns and 'heart-shaped' pillars coming from other porticoes were also found. They were much smaller in size than the relics found in the courtyard, but their forms were very similar, if not even identical. It was significant that bases with an Attic profile — seldom applied within the area of the town at Marina — were also used here [Fig. 4, top], as well as the 'heart-shaped' pillars, similar to those which have survived *in situ* in the courtyard [Fig. 4, bottom]. The fact that two bases of such pillars, which used to be placed in the inside corners of two joining porticoes, were found, indicated that also in this case we were dealing with parts of a ruined peristyle with at least three porticoes. Fragments of this small peristyle were collected without their archaeological context, which could allow their original location to be determined, but in association with house H1. That house, found as one of the first at the excavation site, was partly uncovered during fast-progressing earthworks without archaeological supervision.<sup>3</sup> Some pieces of the small peristyle were reused in the sealing of unused door openings in a much later period, when a part of the previously demolished house was inhabited again. Already at that time, which means around the 5th or 6th century, they were obviously lying separately after the collapse of the porticoes. To sum up, available fragments of supports of the small peristyle include two bases and six

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<sup>2</sup> The names of stylized Marina-type pseudo-Corinthian and pseudo-Ionic orders have been adopted from Prof Wiktor A. Daszewski and following his suggestion. Such name is justified by the particularly frequent occurrence of unique detail forms of this type among the finds from Marina, while they are much rarer elsewhere. See Czermer 2009: 2.

<sup>3</sup> Remains of Hellenistic and Roman buildings were uncovered in 1986 by building workers during earthworks carried out for the Marina tourist-village development project. Following discovery of ancient remains, a mission from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw headed by Wiktor A. Daszewski, undertook archaeological salvage research concurrently with excavations conducted by Egyptian archaeologists. The salvage works were carried out under enormous time pressure to protect the remains from destruction caused by building activity. See Daszewski 1990a: 17–18.

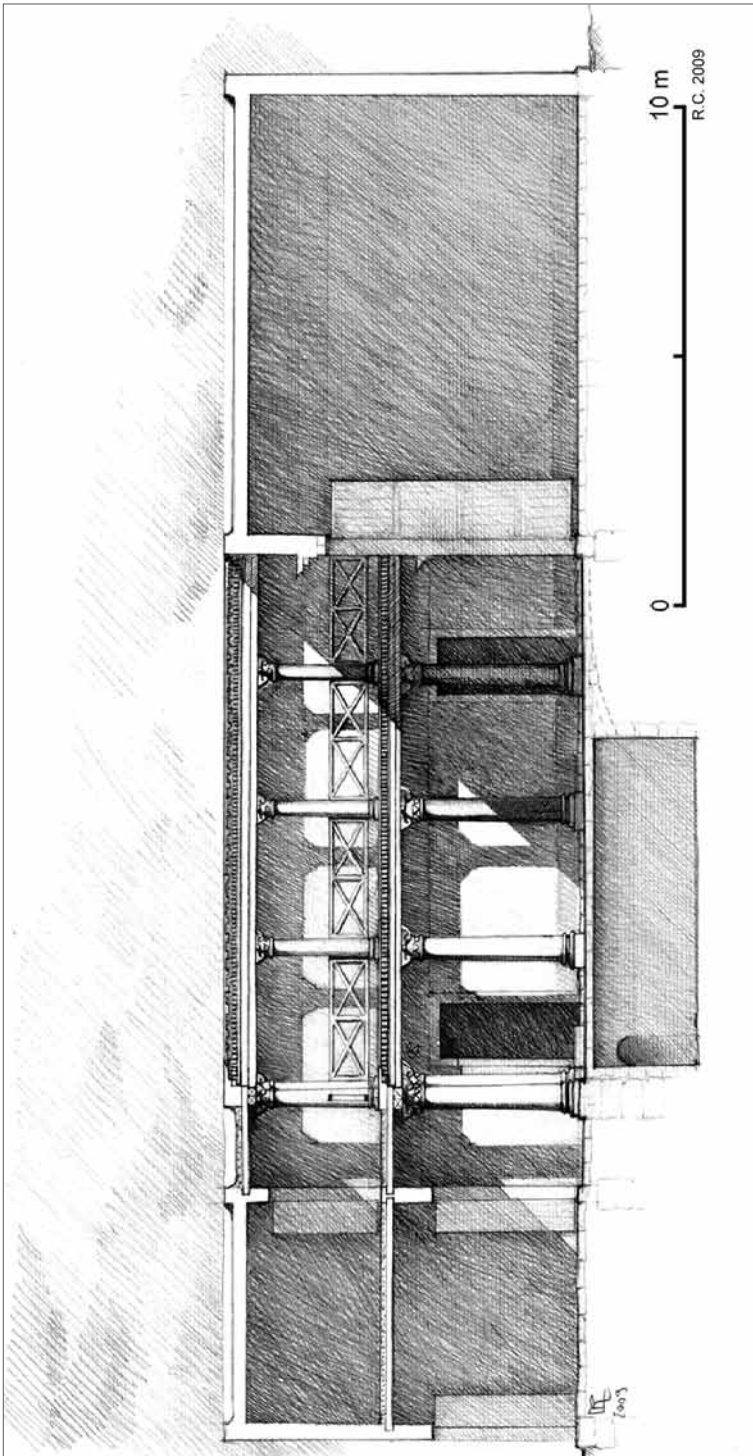


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of a two-storeyed peristyle in House I1 at Marina el-Alamein. Longitudinal cross section (Reconstruction R. Czerner)

tambours from column shafts, and two bases and three pieces of 'heart-shaped' pillar shafts. No capitals have survived. The shaft diameter both of columns and of engaged columns was 30.5 cm in this case. The height of the base without a plinth (they have not survived or there were none) was 11 cm.

Identical forms of both peristyles — the main big one and the small one — together with solutions typical and untypical, and the place where their elements were found indicated explicitly that also the second of them belonged to the same building. The location of the second peristyle in House H1 was unknown, however, and quite early research was undertaken aimed at determining it. After the 2007 season when the clearing and precise measurement documentation of the building was completed, it became clear that the only two units big enough to hold anything like a small peristyle were the northwestern corner unit, which however turned out to be a latrine (as suggested already in Łużyńska 1998: 34), or alternatively it might have been a very spacious main hall. In the second case, small columns, pillars and cornices would have been elements of some kind of monument located in the hall, perhaps adjacent to the wall. In that case there should have been foundations of this structure, yet no such remains were found.

Two walls of the kind have survived in the middle of the mentioned room in the northwestern part of the house: one just outlined in the floor, and the other which has survived up to the height of around 60 cm. They might have served as a raised stylobate. However, a detailed examination of both walls and their foundations revealed that they also could not have been stylobates of a three-portico peristyle.

When it definitely proved impossible for the second peristyle to be situated in any place at the ground floor level of House H1, the existence and function of an upper storey had to be considered, as well as the use of two staircases which have been found in House H1. It should be mentioned here that relics of stairs have survived in all, even the small houses discovered in the settlement in Marina, and that is why the discussion might be of wider scope. In any event, with regard to House H1 one should expect more than just terraces on the roof above the ground floor. There must have been a first floor added, with rooms certainly and even a peristyle with porticoes. Its location is evident. The only viable solution is a two-storeyed design of the main peristyle in the central courtyard [Fig. 5]. Factors arguing in favour of such a layout include similar sets and numbers of big- and small-size portico elements, their identical forms and certain detailed solutions, and of course the fact that the small porticoes could only have been located on the first floor, which was explained above.

Hence the upper storey of the peristyle would have accommodated the galleries, from which one could enter the rooms on the first floor. The galleries were accessible from the main staircase situated in the northern part of the house, east of the entrance vestibule. The staircase adjoined the northeastern corner of the peristyle and on the first floor led directly to the galleries surrounding the courtyard.

## The architecture and proportions of the two-storeyed peristyle porticoes

It is clear from the above that the ground-floor portico of the peristyle in House H1 was constructed of columns, pillars and cornices belonging to the so-called Marina-type pseudo-Corinthian order. It is obvious that the shape of the upper portico was very similar, that is of *Marina* type, although a bit richer (as in the ground-floor porticoes), since Attic bases — rarely used in Marina — were applied there as well. Since no capital from the upper-floor portico has survived, it is not certain, if the supports of the first-floor porticoes were also topped with pseudo-Corinthian capitals. Another possibility are similarly stylized capitals of the pseudo-Ionic type from Marina (Czermer 2009: 22–23). The first solution is more probable, since in a correct layout Ionic columns should be situated below the Corinthian ones, not *vice versa*, and here the ground-floor supports had pseudo-Corinthian capitals.

The elements of cornices found in quite a considerable number in the ruins of the house are of two kinds. The first one is an Ionic cornice with dentils [Fig. 6, left]. In its stylized version, it is geometrized in a manner typical of decoration from Marina, slightly simplified and with edges carved sharper than in the classical version. In the cornice of the second kind, a flat underside of cornice slabs is decorated alternately with narrow flat grooved modillions and wider square hollow modillions, which were charac-

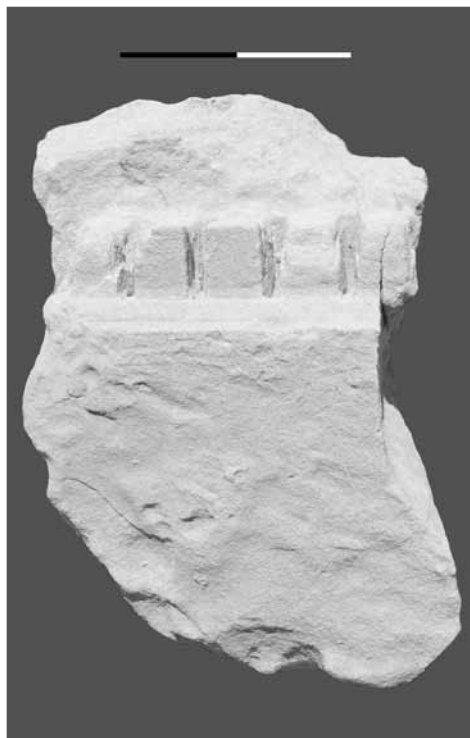


Fig. 6a–b. Elements of a simplified cornice of Ionic type: with dentils (left) and with geometrized modillions and dentils, from house H1 (Photos R. Czermer)

teristic of the Hellenistic architecture and typical of the Marina style. Additionally, Ionic dentils run below the belt of modillions and square offsets [*Fig. 6*, right]. The elaborate form with so many carved elements suggests that it probably topped the first-floor porticoes, crowning the entire composition and forming a more prominent soffit. In the developed cornice with modillions, the size of the parts featured on both cornices, that is first of all of the dentil elements, was smaller, which would be another indication that it was a part of first-floor, smaller in height portico. Additionally, a rule applying to the architectural orders from Marina is confirmed: although both cornices with modillions and cornices with dentils, as well as cornices with elements of both kinds were used here, the modillions appeared only in the pseudo-Corinthian order, while dentils — despite a general linking with the Ionic or pseudo-Ionic order — could accompany, even without the modillions, columns of both orders (Czerner 2009: 22).<sup>4</sup> This is another argument in favor of the pseudo-Corinthian order being used in porticoes of both storeys of the peristyle in House H1.

Concluding, porticoes on both levels of the peristyle of House H1 were constructed in an order unique to Marina, which was a geometric stylization of the Corinthian order. On both storeys, the supports rested on regular classical Attic bases untypical of Marina. The plinths of the bigger ground-floor bases were made as separate elements. They were formed by making two successive stone blocks in the stylobate row higher (rectangular and of otherwise standard size: 2 by 1 by 1 ft = 61 by 30.5 by 30.5 cm). In the case of the smaller bases, the profiled parts were not hewn together with the plinths, and it is uncertain if the plinths ever existed. No relic of them has survived.

Absence of friezes in the Corinthian and Ionic entablatures was typical of porticoes in Marina. The cornice rested directly on an architrave with usually only two *fasciae*. While cornices with modillions could also be accompanied by Doric entablatures with a triglyph–metope frieze, in Marina such solutions seem to have been used only in porticoes of particularly stately buildings or in the lintels of portals. Besides, in post-1st century entablatures it is a peculiar and non classical combination, and even in Marina it is not popular, although relatively more frequent than anywhere else. Consequently, one should expect that there was no frieze in the peristyle of House H1. It is also indicated by the fact that two levels of porticoes must have made the whole building very high for a dwelling, and using entablatures with friezes would make it even higher.

Another solution typical of porticoes in Marina was to substitute the stone architraves with wooden beams. Corinthian or Ionic architraves made of stone were not used anywhere but in monuments in the necropolis and in small architectural elements such as wall niches and portals. Instead of them, a few parallel wooden beams were laid on the columns. Their tracks impressed in the mortar can be seen on tops of several capitals. Applying such a construction solution was connected with the fact that the width of

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<sup>4</sup> This rule did not apply in other regions, where combinations of Ionic or pseudo-Ionic columns with a cornice supported by geometricized modillions have been found. This was, for example, the case of the Serapeum in Mons Porphyrites. See Kraus *et alii* 1967: 177, Fig. 19.

the portico intercolumniations in Marina was usually considerable, and resulted probably from thrift and low strength of the local stone (oolite limestone extracted locally, see Mrozek-Wysocka 2008; Skoczylas 2002: 1179). Of course sets of wooden beams could imitate the form of a stone architrave and be arranged in layers with an offset corresponding to a division between two *fasciae*, which was probably the case of the peristyle in House H1. Beams lying in place of architraves supported the ends of floor beams, which were perpendicular to them and fixed to the wall with the other ends. They probably protruded slightly and the spaces between them were perhaps filled with short wooden elements. After smoothing the face of the whole structure with plaster, the effect of an architrave with two *fasciae* would be obtained. On this structure, slabs topped with a cornice were laid in front of the portico, and followed deeper in by a floor of unknown structure. It was probably made of wooden elements and mortar. On the cornice slabs, the columns of the second storey were standing, and on top of it the same structure was repeated, but this time it supported a flat, terrace roof. As it was mentioned before, it is unknown if there were plinths under the bases of the smaller columns, but if it was so, then they were made of separate slabs laid directly on the cornice of the ground-floor portico. In the shafts of first-floor columns and engaged columns, at a height between 19 and 26 cm from the base's foot, rectangular hollows were hewn, which was typically done when fixing small wooden beams. These were probably lower elements of the railing structure [see *Fig. 4*, bottom]. Similar sockets were hewn higher in the shafts, on the level matching the upper edge of the rail. Marks of bars support the thesis of a two-storeyed peristyle.

The undersides of the cornices were painted. An example of such polychromy has been preserved on an element of the simplified cornice with geometricized modillions and dentils [see *Fig. 6*, left]. The nooks between the dentils contain residual traces of a dark, either black or dark green paint. The modillions and the supporting element lengthening their profile were painted with Pompeian red, the panels between them and the inside of the wider modillions were filled with the above-mentioned black or dark green. Other elements of architectural orders, including the entablature, columns and perhaps the capitals, could have also been painted. No examples, however, of such painting have survived.

The height of the porticoes is another vital issue. As mentioned before, it was quite considerable for a two-storeyed peristyle and caused the whole house to be tall. It may raise doubts and, in an extreme case, even invalidate the whole hypothesis. It ought to be also kept in mind that some rooms should be one-storeyed even in a two-storeyed mansion, which means their full height should be equal to the height of two storeys of porticoes. No doubt this was the case of the main hall. In House H1 it was of considerable size in plan, with 7.02–7.12 m from east to west and 8.75–8.84 m from north to south. Thus, it can be assumed that its height was also considerable. But was it high enough? It is possible to reconstruct the size of the main entrance leading to the hall, knowing that it was 2.21 m wide. Assuming that the height was proportional, and according to

the rules of the Ionic and Corinthian orders the height should equal 2.5 widths, the entrance would be at least 5.52 m high. Therefore, one can expect the main hall and the entire house to be more than 6 m high.

The height of the porticoes and the entire peristyle can be reconstructed based on the proportion principles determined for the stylized orders from Marina during earlier systematic studies (Czerner 2009: 17–18). It should be remembered that although elements of both storeys of porticoes: bases, capitals and cornices have survived, yet complete shafts of columns and pillars are missing, and nothing has survived of architraves made of wooden beams. Hence it is impossible to reconstruct precisely and conclusively the original height of the porticoes.

It was determined through measurements of the best preserved relics, that in the Marina-type pseudo-Corinthian order the most correct column height was equivalent to 18 modules, that is, nine shaft diameters above the base (following Vitruvius in assuming half of this diameter as a module). It is less than in the Vitruvian canon, but still such was the maximum for the columns known from Marina. These proportions were found in supports in the best preserved small architectural elements: wall *aediculae* and portals. However, less slender pseudo-Corinthian columns are also known. In the peristyle of House H1, the requirements of stately appearance would have demanded considerable column height, but concerns that the building should not be too high would require limiting the slenderness of the supports. The more so that the intercolumniations were of considerable size and according to the principles of classical architecture that required using columns of more massive proportions. Thus, the equivalent of 18 modules for the height of the columns of the porticoes from House H1 ought to be viewed as an absolute maximum, but rather improbable in reality.

At the other end of the spectrum, proportionally the lowest columns found in Marina as full sets of preserved elements, which provided their unquestionable size, equaled 14 modules, that is seven diameters, in height. In all cases, however, these were pseudo-Ionic columns, and for pseudo-Corinthian columns this slenderness should be considered as insufficient. This is why for House H1 the most probable column proportion would be 1:8, so the support height would be equivalent to 16 modules. This consideration is of course in great measure purely theoretical.

Assuming such proportions, the height of porticoes and the entire peristyle can be reconstructed as follows:

- ground-floor columns 360 cm,
- architrave proportional to that height (1/18 of the height)<sup>5</sup> 20 cm,
- ground-floor cornice (several elements surviving) 14.5 cm (including the preserved part without *cymatium* equal to 11.5 cm, and the *cymatium* reconstructed in proportion to it),
- first-floor columns 244 cm,

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<sup>5</sup> In this case Vitruvian proportions and principles, that is 1/12–1/18 of the column's height, with 1/18 for the lowest columns (for Vitruvius: 12–15 feet high columns) were confirmed in Marina.

- reconstructed architrave 13.5 cm,
- first-floor cornice (elements have survived together with the *cymatium*) 12.5 cm.

The total height calculated using these measurements would add up to 664.5 cm. Similar calculations for the minimum slenderness of the supports assumed here give a result of 584.6 cm, and for the maximum, 18-module slenderness: 744 cm. The latter would be already too high in proportion to the probable height of the main hall, whereas the height of 664.5 cm is adequate. It should be kept in mind that precise calculations of this kind are only theoretical, and even for the slenderness assumed here original measurements would no doubt be actually different from the reconstructed ones. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine, for example, that the architraves made of even large wooden beams with presumably standard size would have matched the height required by the principles of proportion.

## The place of the peristyle in house architecture

The two-storeyed peristyle was the central feature of the H1 house. As a result, the parts of the building adjacent to it must have been of the same height. To the south it was a one-storeyed, but very high main hall, whereas the structures adjacent to the other three sides were two-storeyed. Most of the west side of the building was probably of this full height, equaling two storeys. The main staircase was situated there and, of course, the entrance vestibule and the sanitary facility, that is, latrine.

It should be recalled here that the courtyard was not situated exactly in the centre of the house but displaced slightly to the west. It resulted from the fact that several more spacious rooms were located to the east of the courtyard. The rooms contained a variety of furnishings and installations, not all identified from the functional point of view, but most of them, and perhaps all evidently utilitarian. They included, for example, a room with a well and another sanitary facility next to it in the northeastern corner of the house, but also a spacious hall of unexplained purpose, accessible not only from inside the house, but also opening to the outside through a separate wide passage, in the four corners of which there were small square basins or vats. Łużyńska reconstructs them as containers for goods, and the whole hall, probably rightly, as a *taberna* (Łużyńska 1998: 32, 35, Figs 6, 8). A spacious and deep basin was enclosed in a neighboring separate room adjoining the second staircase by the outer eastern wall of the building and another latrine situated under the landing of the second staircase. In the southeastern part of the house there was a large group of several rooms with a complicated layout. It was separated from the rest of the house by a corridor, which led from the courtyard to the east.

Considering the character of the rooms situated in the eastern part of House H1 described above, as well as their complicated layout, considerable size of some of them and very small size of others, the extent of this part of the building, it seems distinctly possible that the upper storeys were not constructed over all of the rooms. And since none

of the rooms was as spacious as the main hall, they could not have matched the peristyle in height. Thus it is possible that the body of the east side of the building was not regular and did not have a uniform height, but some of its parts were lower, perhaps with terraces on the roofs. These terraces might have been accessible, apart from other ways, through entrances from the upper storey of the eastern portico of the peristyle courtyard.

These considerations have led us to the issue of the kinds of roofs. In his study on houses from Marina el-Alamein, Stanisław Medeksza researched the question of whether the roofs of the houses and other buildings here were gable roofs characteristic of Greek and Roman architecture or rather terrace roofs typical of Egyptian architecture (Medeksza 1999: 124). The dearth of roof tiles found in excavations at Marina supports the suggestion of terrace roofs being prevalent. The present author claims that in this case, stairs — relics of which have been discovered in all houses — led probably to the terrace level, regardless of the number of storeys in a house. Houses could have been one-storeyed with main halls, such as the *oikos* or *triclinium*, being made higher. They could also have been two-storeyed, permitting the men's area on the ground floor to be separated effectively from the women's area on the first floor in a more functional way. This was clearly the case of House H1 with the described two-storeyed peristyle. The rooms did not necessarily occupy the entire area of the upper floors. Part of it could have been occupied by usable terraces. As it was mentioned above, this is also probably how the eastern part of House H1 was designed. Concluding, one can also expect the entire House H1 to be covered with flat terrace roofs.

It is interesting to note the working of the drainage system of terrace roofs around the peristyle. Similarly to other houses in the settlement in Marina, it was constructed to collect rainwater in tanks constructed under the courtyard floor. But in the H1 house this system was particularly elaborate and carefully thought out. First of all, under the courtyard there were as many as two identical cisterns with barrel vaults, and they occupied almost the entire area within the portico stylobates. Only to the south, that is, where there was no portico, the tanks did not reach the wall closing the courtyard and they were 2.40–2.80 m away from it. The structure of the tanks walls and vaults was independent of the portico structure, and did not use in any way either the stylobates or other house foundations. South of the tanks there were two drains running obliquely from the corners of the courtyard toward the centre and down. Having been joined, they branched off again to the two tanks. However, the downspouts carrying water from the roofs to these drains were placed not in the walls on the courtyard side, which was typical of the houses in Marina. They were situated on the other side of the walls, in less important rooms on either sides of the main hall. They then crossed under the walls, first to the main hall itself and then under the next walls to the corners of the courtyard. In this way, both the stately hall and the peristyle were not encumbered by such utilitarian installations. Also another solution known from the houses in Marina, in which water is carried from the roof by a hollow column shaft, was not used here because of the two storeys of the portico, which made it impossible. In the northwestern corner of

the peristyle there was additional drainage of water from the roof, placed in the north wall at the far end of the portico, immediately next to the corner. It carried rainwater directly into the western tank. There was no similar drainage in the northeastern corner of the peristyle. It could indicate that the eastern parts of the house with numerous utility rooms had a separate drainage of water from the roofs straight into the utilitarian basins or vats situated there. It can also support the that the layout of roofs in this part of the building was less regular.

### Parallel designs from other regions:

The functional and spatial layout of House H1 from the ancient town in Marina el-Alamein is typical of big town residences of the imperial age in the African and Western Roman provinces. Although the concept of the “Roman atrial house” and the “Greek peristyle house” being opposites, which was common until recently, is now supplanted by an evolutionary view which downgrades the significance of this usually quoted duality (Gros 2001: 149), these two supplementary traditions are just the ones that should be seen as the base for the development of this type of residence. Hence the axial layouts with a centrally positioned peristyle can be viewed as a kind of combination of house with *atrium* and house of the *pastas* type (Gros 2001: 164). A layout with a peristyle situated in this place reigns supreme in numerous plans of extensive mansions from the 1st and 2nd century in the area of the Western Empire: Spain, Aquitaine, Gaul, Germania and, more importantly for the present discussion, in Roman Africa (catalogued in Rebuffat 1969; Rebuffat 1974; see also Meyer 1999: 101–121). Numerous examples include houses in Utica (Lézine 1968: 112–117, 123–125, Fig. 19, 21, 25, houses: Maison du Trésor, Maison de la Cascade, Maison de la Chasse; Lézine 1961: Fig. 37), Cuicul (Djemila) (Blanchard-Lemée), Althiburos (Enaifer 1976: 64, Plans II, III, *Maison des Muses*) or primarily 27 houses in the northeastern block of streets in Volubilis (see Etienne 1960). Plans of those houses with usually axial succession of a vestibule, peristyle and main hall (*triclinium*), and with an *exedra* situated laterally, were collected by the architect Gilbert Hallier (Rebuffat *et alii* 1970: Fig. 43, 45).

Although the North African Roman houses mentioned were similar to the example from Marina with their developed spatial layout and two storeys (in most cases), their peristyles were generally single-level ones or else not enough is known about their higher parts. Only in the house referred to as situated “west of the Governor’s Palace” in Volubilis researchers reconstructed conclusively a two-storeyed peristyle, based on preserved relics of columns of two sizes (Etienne 1960: 129–130, Pl. XXXIV). Although different architectural orders and different column forms were applied there, the peristyle is very similar in size and proportions to the discussed peristyle from House H1 in Marina. In the peristyle from Volubilis, the height of the ground floor columns was 3.80 m, and of the first floor columns 2.25 m. Sockets for fixing a balustrade were noted also in a relic of a first-floor column preserved there.

The two-storeyed peristyle of the H1 house in Marina el-Alamein attracts particular attention, since — although a similar plan was commonly used — it was an extremely rare solution. It is also very extensive and stately, although functionally obvious and advantageous. To date no relics of houses, either Hellenistic or Roman, with courtyards of such developed layout, have been found in Egypt.

However, another house built in the area under the same influence, in Cyrenaica, is known very well. The “Palazzo delle Colonne” in Ptolemais, as it is the house in question, was one of the Alexandrian governor’s residences. Sandro Stucchi (1975: 216–217) has dated the house to the 1st century based on the figurative forms of the capitals, but according to Pierre Gros (2001: 49) it was erected much earlier. The sprawling structure of the building includes not one, but two double-storeyed peristyles. Apart from the main “great peristyle” (Pesce 1950: 23–28), a parallel for the courtyard from Marina el-Alamein, the so-called “House of a Small Peristyle” incorporated in the structure of the palace attracts perhaps more attention being formally more related (Pesce 1950: 60–62). As the name itself indicates, a small peristyle on a regular plan is its essential part. In the peristyle, similarly as in the reconstructed courtyard of House H1 in Marina, the porticoes of two storeys were built exactly one on top of the other with columns of the upper level standing on the ground-floor columns, whereas in the great peristyle of the “Palazzo delle Colonne” the first-floor porticoes were moved back to the line of the back walls of the ground-floor porticoes. Despite the formal similarities, there are also some differences between the courtyard of the “House of a Small Peristyle” and the one from Marina el-Alamein. First of all, the upper storey of the “House of a Small Peristyle” is higher than the bottom one, which translates also into higher columns of the upper portico. Moreover, the architectural orders applied are different, Doric being used on both levels. In the main peristyle of the palace, the columns of the upper storey are lower in the classical way. Additionally, both levels of porticoes are separated by a slope roof covering the bottom one. The orders here are also in accordance with the classical principles: Corinthian on the first floor and Ionic on the ground floor.

An interesting analogy is supplied by the Meroitic Palace of Natakamani in Gebel Barkal, dated to the 2nd century. On the grounds of preserved relics of column capitals of two sizes and other architectural elements, Sergio Barberini reconstructed there a regular peristyle with two storeys of porticoes (Barberini 2010). A complete peristyle with five intercolumniations in each portico occupied a rectangular area, slightly elongated but with nearly square proportions. The reconstructed heights of the ground-floor and first-floor portico columns are over 5 m and over 3.5 m respectively, and as for the proportions they resemble those from the ancient town of Marina, but have entirely different, Egyptian forms. The columns are topped with papyrus capitals, while the cornices take on the form of a *cavetto*. In the architecture of the palace and particularly in its layout, Egyptian and Hellenistic–Roman influences are noticeable. Also the proportions of the columns, which are of considerable slenderness, refer to Greek–Roman forms.

It should be added that a two-storeyed portico has also been proposed for the so-called *locus* 4 in the southern baths situated by the main square of the ancient town in Marina el-Alamein (S. Medeksza, pers. comm.). Located in the western part of the bath, *locus* 4 appears to be a peristyle courtyard with porticoes on three sides, to the north, west and south. Bases and lower parts of columns have survived here *in situ*, their upper parts with capitals of the pseudo-Ionic order having tumbled nearby. However, elements of column shafts and a corresponding pseudo-Corinthian capital of smaller size were also found in the collapsed debris of the porticoes. Hence, it may be concluded that similarly the smaller columns were from the first-floor portico built on top of the one which has survived partially on the ground floor (see Medeksza *et alii* 2007–2009; Medeksza *et alii*, forthcoming).

There can be no doubt that the design with a peristyle with two-storeyed porticoes identified in House H1 from the ancient settlement in Marina el-Alamein, can also be found in other places in North Africa in the area which remained under Hellenistic and Roman influences. The presented parallels show that the layout of both house and peristyle was hardly unique and besides, the solution with two-storeyed porticoes was logical and obvious. It is extraordinary mainly because of the stateliness of its appearance. Its presence in a house built in the ancient town from Marina el-Alamein speaks of the importance and affluence of this settlement.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

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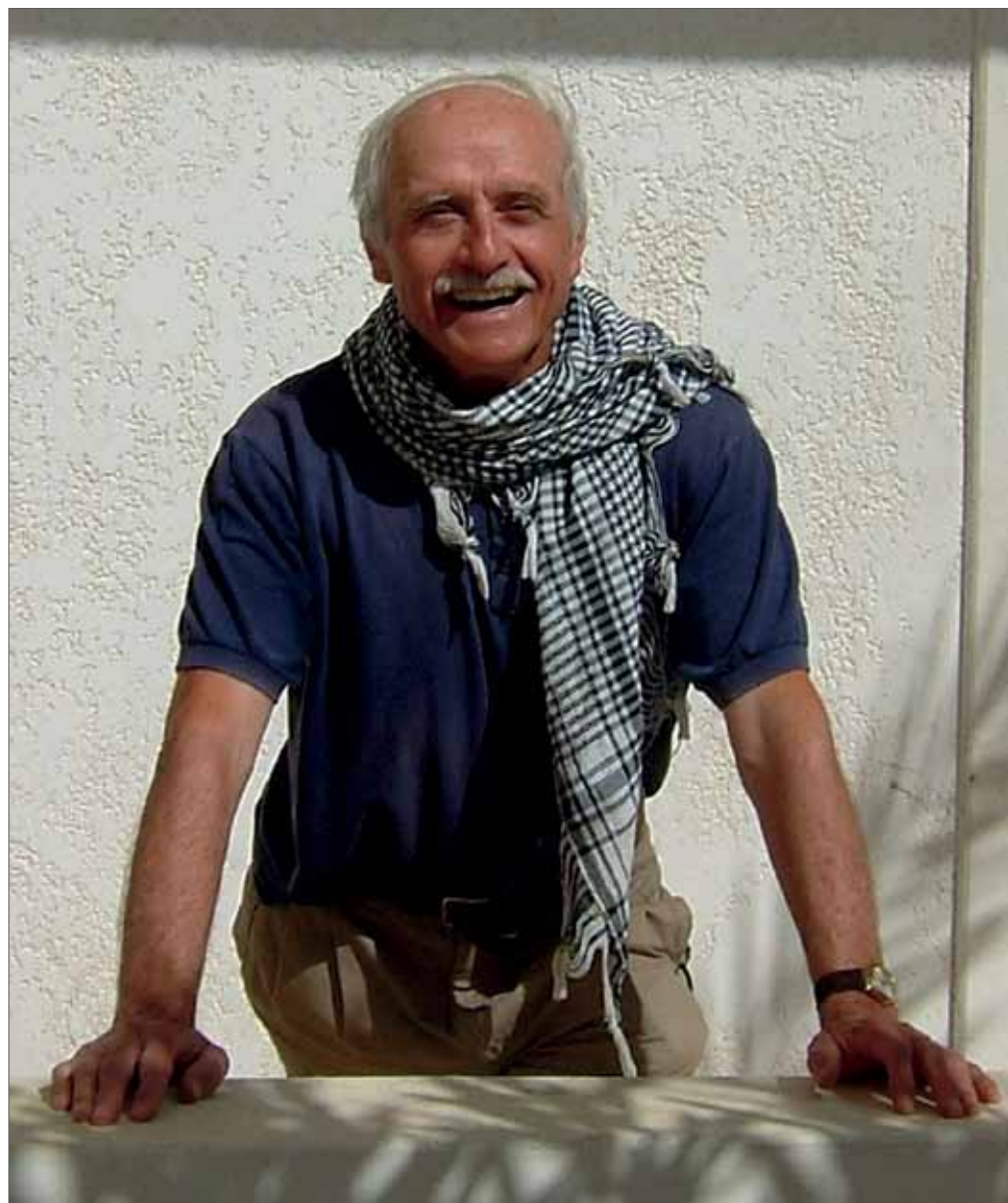
AA	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i> , Berlin
AAAS	<i>Annales archéologiques arabes de Syrie</i> , Damas
ABSA	<i>Annual of the British School of Athens</i> , London
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> , New York
APF	<i>Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete</i> , Leipzig, Stuttgart
ASAE	<i>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte</i> , Le Caire
BAAL	<i>Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises</i> , Beirut
BABesch	<i>Bulletin antieke Beschaving</i> , Louvain
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i> , Paris
BdÉ	<i>Bibliothèque d'étude</i> , Le Caire
BEFAR	<i>Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome</i> , Rome, Paris
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> , Le Caire
BSFE	<i>Bulletin de la Société française d'égyptologie</i> , Paris
CCE	<i>Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne</i> , Le Caire
CCEC	<i>Cahiers du Centre d'études chypriotes</i> , Nanterre
CdÉ	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i> , Bruxelles
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i> , Paris
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , Vienna
EtTrav	<i>Études et travaux</i> , Varsovie
GM	<i>Göttinger Miszellen</i> , Göttingen
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i> , Durham, NC
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i> , Jerusalem
JbAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i> , London
JGS	<i>Journal of Glass Studies</i> , New York
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i> , London
JJP	<i>Journal of Juristic Papyrology</i> , Warsaw
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i> , Ann Arbor, MI
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> , London
KHKM	<i>Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej</i> , Warszawa
LIMC	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> , Zurich
MDAIA	<i>Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung</i> , Berlin
MDAIK	<i>Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo</i> , Wiesbaden
MEFRA	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité</i> , Paris
MIFAO	<i>Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> , Le Caire
NC	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i> , London
NumAntCl	<i>Numismatica e antichità classiche</i> , Logano
OLA	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta</i> , Louvain
PAM	<i>Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean</i> , Warsaw
RACrist	<i>Rivista di archeologia cristiana</i> , Cité du Vatican
RBK	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i> , Stuttgart

RDAC	<i>Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, Nicosia</i>
RdÉ	<i>Revue d'égyptologie, Paris, Louvain</i>
REPPAL	<i>Revue du centre d'études de la civilisation phénicienne-punique et des antiquités libyques</i>
RMNW	<i>Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, Warszawa</i>
RSO	<i>Rivista degli studi orientali, Roma</i>
RTAM	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, Gembloux</i>
RTAM	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, Gembloux, Louvain</i>
SAAC	<i>Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization, Kraków</i>
VetChr	<i>Vetera christianorum, Bari</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik, Bonn</i>

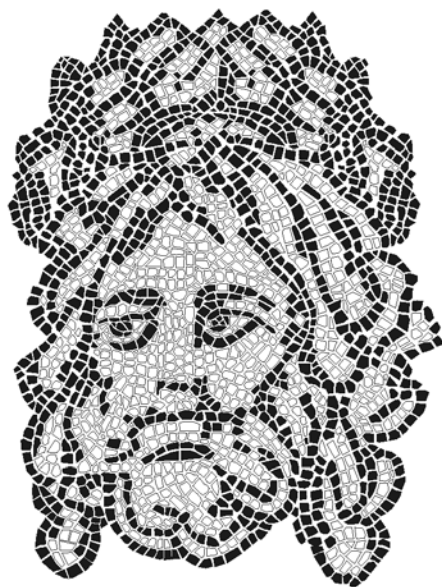
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DACL	F. Cabrol, H. Leclercq, <i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie, Paris, 1907–1953</i>
LCI	E. Kirschbaum, W. Braunfels (eds), <i>Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie, Rom: Herder, 1968–1976</i>
RealEnc	A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, K. Mittelhaus, <i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Stuttgart–Münich, 1893–1980</i>

CLASSICA ORIENTALIA



# CLASSICA ORIENTALIA



Essays Presented to  
Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski  
on his 75th Birthday

Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology  
University of Warsaw  
Wydawnictwo DiG

# Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw

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# CONTENTS

---

Abbreviations.....	9
Foreword.....	11
Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski: Essay presented on his 75th birthday anniversary.....	13
Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski: List of publications.....	31
KRZYSZTOF BABRAJ	
Interprétation de la lettre τω̄ sur le vêtement du Christ et du geste de l'ogdoade sur la mosaïque absidiale de l'église Santa Pudenziana à Rome.....	43
JANINE BALTŲ	
Le rinceau d'acanthé à fond noir dans la mosaïque syrienne : l'exemple de Mariamin.....	73
JEAN-CHARLES BALTŲ	
Une « nouvelle » dédicace apaméenne à Cn. Marcius Rustius Rufinus.....	89
GRAŻYNA BĄKOWSKA-CZERNER	
Aphrodite in Egypt. Images of the goddess from Marina el-Alamein.....	97
GIUSEPPINA CAPRIOTTI-VITTOZZI	
Un gruppo scultoreo da Dendera al Museo del Cairo: due fanciulli divini e i due luminari.....	115
RAFAŁ CZERNER	
The peristyle of House H1 in the ancient town at Marina el-Alamein.....	129
KRZYSZTOF DOMŻAŁSKI	
Roman fine pottery from a cellar under Oil-press E.I at Chhim (Lebanon).....	147
PIOTR DYCZEK	
From the history on ancient Rhizon/Risinium: Why the Illyrian King Agron and Queen Teuta came to a bad end and who was Ballaios?.....	157
PAVLOS FLOURENTZOS	
New evidence of the aniconic iconography of Astarte-Aphrodite in Cyprus.....	175
MICHAŁ GAWLIKOWSKI	
Bagatelles épigraphiques.....	183
WŁODZIMIERZ GODLEWSKI	
Mosaic floor from the sanctuary of the EC.II cathedral in Dongola.....	193
TOMASZ GÓRECKI	
Roman ceramic <i>thymiaterion</i> from a Coptic hermitage in Thebes.....	199

TOMASZ HERBICH, HARALD VAN DER OSTEN, IWONA ZYCH Geophys. EC.II cs applied to the investigation of Graeco-Roman coastal towns west of Alexandria: the case of Marina el-Alamein.....	209
MARIA KACZMAREK Human remains from Marina el-Alamein.....	233
ZSOLT KISS Deux fragments de portraits funéraires romains de Deir el-Bahari.....	259
JERZY KOLENDO Zita, une ville oubliée de Tripolitaine.....	267
RENATA KUCHARCZYK Glass medallion in the shape of a lion's head mask.....	277
BARBARA LICHOCKA <i>Delta-epsilon</i> issues of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander.....	287
JOHN LUND Head vases of the Magenta Group from Cyprus.....	325
ADAM ŁAJTAR <i>Divus Probus</i> (?) in a fragmentary building(?) inscription in Latin found in Kato (Nea) Paphos, Cyprus.....	341
ADAM ŁUKASZEWICZ A fish from the sea.....	353
GRZEGORZ MAJCHEREK, IWONA ZYCH The Cretan presence in Marina el-Alamein.....	357
HENRYK MEYZA A mask of ἡγεμῶν θεράπων with ὄγκος(?) from Paphos.....	379
KAROL MYŚLIWIEC L'acquis des fouilles de Tell Atrib pour la connaissance de l'époque ptolémaïque.....	387
JANUSZ A. OSTROWSKI Najwcześniejsza polska wzmianka o sycylijskich <i>antiquitates</i> (with summary in English).....	399
EWDOKSIA PAPUCI-WŁADYKA The contribution of Kraków archaeologists to excavating Nea Paphos, the ancient capital of Cyprus.....	413
ANNA POŁUDNIKIEWICZ “Megarian” bowls from Tell Atrib.....	425
ZOFIA SZTETYŁO Amphoras on Knidian amphoras.....	441
HANNA SZYMAŃSKA Two “armed” terracottas from Athribis.....	451