

The baths at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria as a foundation of Constantine the Great? Reconsidering the inscribed mark ΦΛ ANT

Anna Urszula Kordas 

Faculty of Culture and Arts, University of Warsaw <au.kordas@uw.edu.pl>

Abstract: This article aims to reconsider the inscribed marks on reused Ionic capitals found within the area of the baths at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. The marks ΦΛ ANT are reconstructed as the name of a prefect of Egypt, Flavius Antonius Theodorus (337 and 338 CE). This connection, as well as reconsideration of the archaeological evidence, provides precise clues to the dating of the baths' foundation. Column capitals of earlier date, which were reused in the baths and inscribed with the name of the prefect of Egypt, suggest this official's involvement in supplying building material for the construction. This evidence provides an opportunity to reconsider the duties of the prefect of Egypt in the 4th c. CE.

Keywords: Prefect of Egypt, epigraphy, masons' marks, baths, Alexandria, Flavius Antonius Theodorus

Introduction

In the late 1960s, in the northern part of the Late Roman baths at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria, an Ionic capital of bluish-white marble was found (Field Reg. 60, h. 0.245 m, diam. 0.60 m, w. 0.88 m) which had an abbreviated inscription, ΦΛ ANT, carved on its underside (Figs. 1 and 2a–b).¹ The *phi* is engraved in a decorative ligature with the *lambda*, which forms the vertical bottom line of the *phi*. The *nu* and *tau* also form a ligature. This text was interpreted by the first editor, as a name, such as Φλ(άουϊος) Ἀντ(ωνίνος) or Φλ(άουϊος) Ἀντ(ώνιος).² Another very similar Ionic capital of grayish-white marble, without any inscription, was also found in the area of the baths (Field Reg 15, h. 0.21 m, diam. 0.585 m, w. 0.88 m; Fig. 3),³ as was half of a third capital (Field Reg. 108, h. 0.25 m, diam. ca. 0.5 m, Fig. 4) on which part of a mark like that on the first capital is preserved on the underside; in this case, only the letter Φ is preserved.⁴ These Ionic capitals, with

¹ Found in sector AN in the northern passage. The original location of this element in the decoration of the baths is uncertain. For a description of the capital, see Kołataj 1992, 93–95, figs. 36–37; Pensabene 1993, 341 no. 124 (it seems that the author confused the find spot of the capital with that of the following capital, no. 125, writing that it was discovered in a “sala con mosaico”); Tkaczow 2008, 68. For more on the baths and their archaeological context, see Kołataj 1992, 93–95; Tkaczow 1993, 97–99; Kiss et al. 2000, 5–33; 134–35; Tkaczow 2008, 64–74.

² Łukaszewicz 1990, 133 no. 1, wrote that the name “Flavius” seems to be a satisfactory solution to what was likely a combination of superposed Φ and Λ; the restoration of “Antoninus” remains conjectural, although perhaps more probable than Ἀντώνιος *vel sim*”; in SEG XL 1553 the inscription is described as “owner’s name,” the rest of the information repeated after the editio princeps; BE 1991, 93: “le monogramme Φλ(άουϊος) Ἀντ(ωνίνος?): ce personnage aurait racheté la colonne dans un bâtiment en démolition pour l’offrir aux thermes, selon une habitude bien documentée.” Now, following anastylosis, the inscription is invisible.

³ Found in the southern part of the frigidarium, in a pile of rubble. Kołataj 1992, 93–95, figs. 36–37; Pensabene 1993, 341, no. 125; Tkaczow 2008, 68, pl. X, 2.

⁴ A surface find from the western part of the baths, found in 1977: Tkaczow 2008, 68.



Fig. 1. Reused Ionic capital, Field Reg. 60, found in the baths at Kom el-Dikka, Alexandria. (Courtesy of the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology; G. Majcherek.)

their distinctive Ionic kyma and pulvini, follow late Hellenistic models, but certain minor decorative details and the type of marble convinced Patrizio Pensabene that they should be dated to between the 1st and the early 2nd c. CE and interpreted as imports from Asia Minor reused in the later baths.⁵

There are many possibilities regarding the identity of this Flavius Ant(- -?), and the editio princeps of the text left this question unanswered. The inscribed mark itself has since been inter-

preted as a “proprietor’s mark,” indicating that the element, bought from a “dismantled building,” was “a private contribution to the building of the thermae.”⁶ However, from the beginning of the 4th c. CE onwards, as a consequence of Constantine’s victory over Licinius in 324 CE, the name Flavius, which was the emperor’s gentilicium, was often assumed by provincial governors, members of their officia, and officials or prominent dignitaries, soldiers and veterans, and especially decurions, as well as *curatores civitatis*.⁷ Thus, it became a status marker for a person who bore the name. An important conclusion results from this observation: the name Flavius engraved on the Ionic capitals must have belonged to a high-ranking civilian or military imperial official.

Archaeological evidence of the baths

As for the chronology of the baths at Kom el-Dikka, the moment of their foundation is uncertain. During excavations, no relevant inscription was found which would help date the construction or identify its founder. Furthermore, none of the written sources describing Alexandria’s baths contain sufficient details to permit a definite identification of the baths at Kom el-Dikka.⁸ The insula of the baths (Fig. 5) was formerly a residential quarter containing wealthy urban houses dated to between the 1st and 2nd c. CE,⁹ which were destroyed at the end of the 3rd c. CE.¹⁰ Later, the whole urban block was completely reorganized and the villas built over by a public complex including the baths.¹¹

⁵ Pensabene 1993, 341, nos. 124–25. Łukaszewicz 1990, 133, proposed dating them to the Hadrianic or post-Hadrianic period.

⁶ Łukaszewicz 1990, 133.

⁷ Keenan 1974, 301. For a broader treatment of the civil administration of Egypt, see Lallemand 1964.

⁸ Calderini 1973, 96–97; Kołataj 1992, 41; Gascou 2012, 315–17, esp. n.41, on the hypothesis that the baths at Kom el-Dikka were a work of Valens.

⁹ For more on the urban houses at Kom el-Dikka, see Rodziewicz 1984, 9–33; Majcherek 1995; Kołataj et al. 2007.

¹⁰ Breccia 1922, 28; Kołataj 1992, 47; Kiss 2007, 187; cf. Johnson 1950, 20.

¹¹ It was complete with palaestras, public latrines, a huge masonry cistern, a large portico cutting across the entire width of the city block from the north southwards, and a theatre built at its

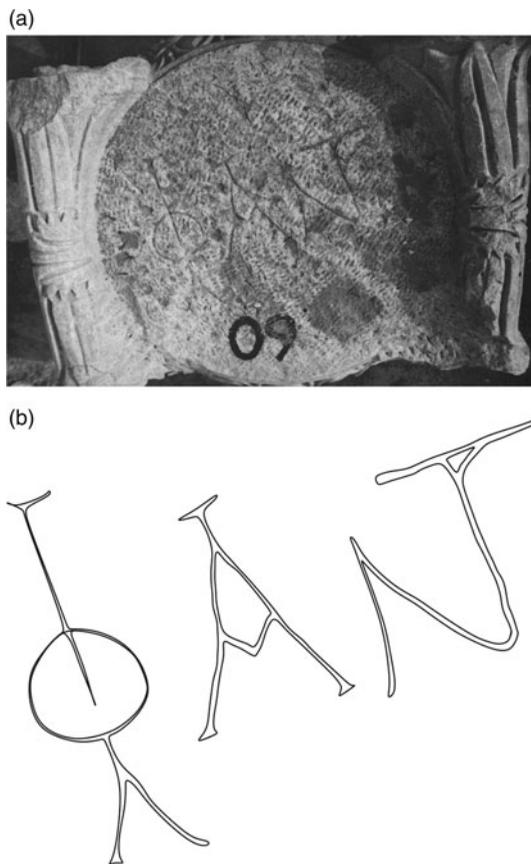


Fig. 2. (a) Underside of the Ionic capital Field Reg. 60 with the inscription $\Phi\Lambda$ ANT, found in the baths at Kom el-Dikka, Alexandria. (Łukaszewicz 1990, pl. Ila; courtesy of Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH.) (b) Drawing of the inscription $\Phi\Lambda$ ANT. (A. Kordas.)

monumental inscription for a public building.¹⁴ A review of imperial names for a reconstruction of this inscription pointed to Constantine, Constantius, or Constans as the only possibilities, and therefore either the Constantinian or post-Constantinian period could be considered a viable date for the construction of the baths.¹⁵

Wojciech Kołataj, who excavated the baths, argued that the decision to construct them was made in the reign of Gratian, on the basis of a coin found in a trial pit adjacent to the remains of the structure's southern exterior wall; the coin was within a layer containing fragmented ceramics, including terra sigillata and lamps dated to between the 2nd and 4th c. CE.¹² This layer, a leveling fill over the earlier urban villas, was interpreted as concurrent with the first phase of the construction of the public buildings in the insula. Kołataj connected the decision to construct the baths with the tsunami of 365 CE. However, it remains possible that the construction of public buildings in this area could have already been underway in the first half of the 4th c CE.¹³ In support of this hypothesis, in the north-eastern corner of the baths complex a huge limestone block was found (Fig. 6) with remnants of two extremely big letters TA, which suggest that it was a

southern end, accompanied by 20 auditoria interpreted as lecture halls. For a rich bibliography on the public complex in Kom el-Dikka, see Majcherek 2010.

¹² Kołataj 1992, 47, no. 54; coins with this type of representation and legend on the reverse were struck by three emperors: Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I.

¹³ McKenzie 2007, 210–13. In turn, Kiss 2007, 188 n.10, 190 nn.22–24, was of the opinion that it is likely that the entire city was rebuilt during the peaceful period in the reign of Constantine. He also cited two porphyry statues, the first enthroned, found not far from Via Canopica and attributed to Galerius or Constantine, the second found near the imperial baths and attributed probably to Constantius II. According to him, the date of the baths should be pushed back to the reign of Constantius II.

¹⁴ Łukaszewicz 1990, 135–36, no. 3; SEG XL 1555.

¹⁵ Łukaszewicz 1990, 135.



Fig. 3. Reused Ionic capital, Field Reg. 15, found in the baths at Kom el-Dikka, Alexandria. (Courtesy of the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology; E. Kulicka.)

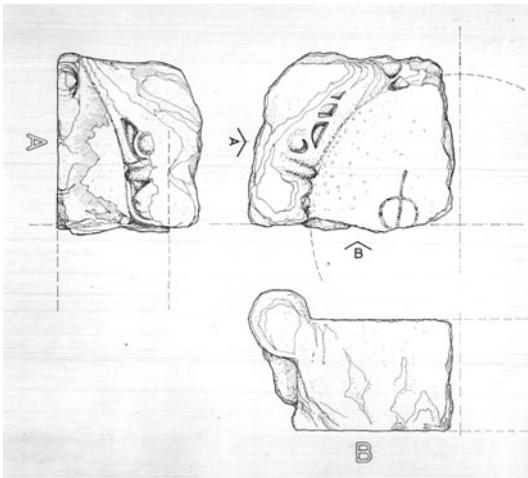


Fig. 4. Drawing of the Ionic capital, Field Reg. 108, probably with a fragment of the mark $\Phi\Lambda\text{ANT}$, although only one letter Φ is preserved. Found in the baths at Kom el-Dikka, Alexandria. (Courtesy of the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences; K. Kamiński.)

The baths were restored or rebuilt multiple times following their initial construction. Exploration of the pavements of the baths indicated at least two reconstructions. The find of coin, an issue of Carthage dated to the years 395–425 CE,¹⁶ provides the most authoritative terminus post quem for the first of these rebuildings. The second is dated by a coin of Mauricius Tiberius of 582–602 CE, which was found in the bedding of the latest pavement. Kołataj was inclined to date the first rebuilding to the first half of the 5th c. CE and place the second rebuilding after the earthquake of 535 CE.¹⁷ In sum, the baths had three main phases and, due to the extent of the alterations made in the second and third of these, it is impossible to reconstruct the exact architectural decoration of the first phase.

A range of indicators suggest that these baths were probably funded by the emperor. This is suggested, in part, by their size and symmetrical design. Their architectural characteristics and monumental scale are quite different from the Mareotic group of baths in the region of Alexandria and from other Egyptian regional baths. For this reason they

were assigned by Thibaud Fournet and Bérangère Redon to a separate group, the so-called Imperial baths, which reproduced, or attempted to reproduce, the gigantic baths built in Rome during the Imperial period.¹⁸ They assume that baths of this type were most probably built on the initiative or with the financial support of the emperor. Indeed, at Kom el-Dikka it is hard to imagine that anyone other than the emperor or his local representative could have authorized such a large-scale reorganization of the site and demolition of existing houses at this date.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kołataj 1992, 49–50.

¹⁷ Kołataj 1992, 45–50. It was also determined that the baths had stopped operating before the Arab raids, i.e., before 641 CE, and seem to have been abandoned by the time of the Persian invasion of Chosroes II in 618 CE.

¹⁸ Fournet and Redon 2017, 290.

¹⁹ Kołataj 1992, 170; McKenzie 2007, 212.

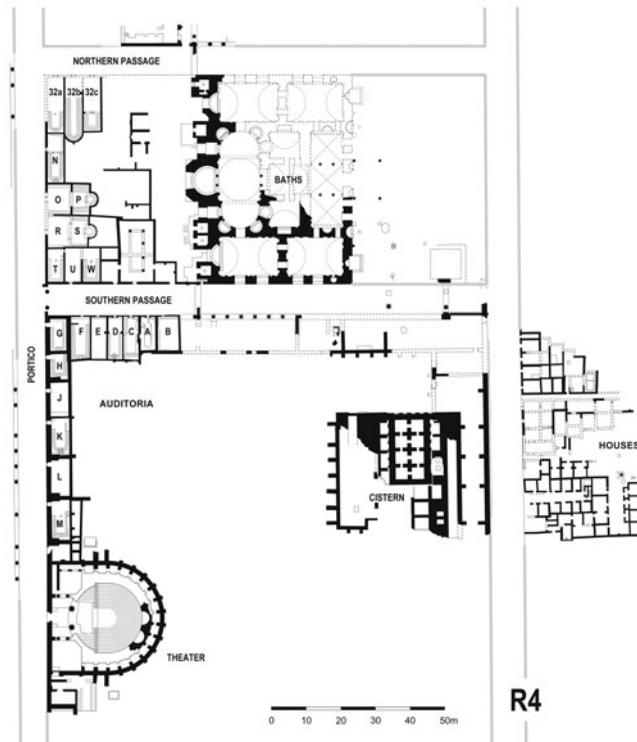


Fig. 5. Plan of the architectural complexes discovered at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. (Courtesy of the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology; drawing by W. Kolář, A. Pisarzewski, and D. Tarara.)

Identification of ΦΛ ANT

The best evidence for who precisely was responsible for the reorganization of the Kom el-Dikka site and the construction of the baths is provided by the inscribed mark on the Ionic capital. The name Flavius on these capitals suggests that this individual was a high imperial official. *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* lists only five people of high rank whose names could be abbreviated as Fl. Ant. Only one of these held the highest office in Egypt – that of the prefect of Egypt – and this person seems worthy of further consideration in the context of the construction of the baths.²⁰ This individual, Flavius

²⁰ The four other candidates are: 1) *PRLE* I, 73: Antoninus 6. He was *rationalis* of Egypt (διασημότητος καθολικός), attested in a record of proceedings before *logistes* of Oxyrhynchus in *P. Harris* 160, line 12, which is dated to between 329 and 331 CE. He was listed only by the name Antoninus, without the name Flavius, though it is likely that he assumed the name Flavius as *rationalis*. He is not attested at Alexandria, however. 2) *PRLE* I, 71: Antiochus 3, who was an *agens in rebus* (οι ἀγεντισιρίβους) attested in Athan. *Ap. Const.* 10, and present in Alexandria in 350 CE is another candidate. *Agentes* were officials who “carry imperial messages, which gave them the right to the *cursus publicus*,” but their “broader responsibilities included supervision of any state functionary and reports to the emperor on subversion and administrative malpractice”; some of them “were sent to the provinces as a kind of secret police” or “acted as state prosecutors, inspectors of customs offices, state construction” (Kazhadan 1991, 36–37). This individual, however, is listed only by the name Antiochus without the name Flavius and,

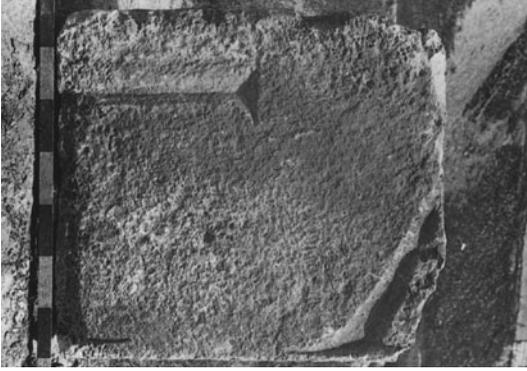


Fig. 6. Huge limestone block found in the northeastern corner of the baths complex, with remnants of two extremely big letters: TA. (Łukaszewicz 1990, pl. IIIa; courtesy of Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH.)

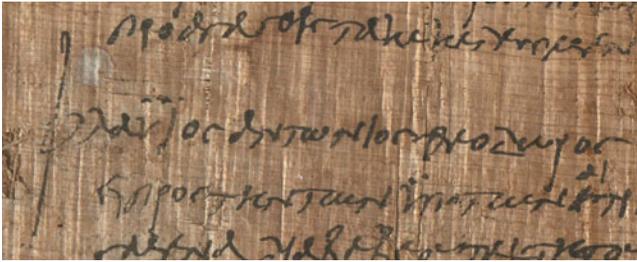


Fig. 7. POxy 67, the beginning of line 8 with the name of Φλαύιος Αντώνιος Θεόδωρος. (© British Library Board, Papyrus 754(A).)

Antonius Theodorus,²¹ is mentioned three times in a papyrus (Fig. 7) and described there as prefect of Egypt – ὁ διασημώτατος ἑπαρχος τῆς Αἰγύπτου – in a petition regarding a dispute over some property.²² The document is dated to March 28, 338 CE. He also is mentioned as prefect of Egypt in a dating formula of a letter by a bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius: “For 338. Coss. Ursus and Polemius; Præf. the same Theodorus, of Heliopolis, and of the Catholics. After him, for the second year, Philagrius; Indict. XI; Easter-day, VII Kal. Ap. XXX Phamenoth; Moon 18 1/2; æra Dioclet. 54.”²³ Thanks to the index of Athanasius, *Fest. Ind.* s.a. 338, this is dated precisely to March 26, 388 CE. We know that the Flavius Philagrius mentioned in the formula was the preceding prefect of Egypt, between

335 and 337 CE, and that Constantius II reappointed him to the same office for the years 338–40 CE.²⁴

Flavius Antonius Theodorus is also known from two dipinti painted in the tomb of Ramesses VI in the Valley of the Kings in Thebes. In the first he presented himself as

apart from this one reference to him, we know nothing more about him. 3) *PRLE* I, 262: Flavius Antonius Domitianus 5, v. c. *praeses* (ὁ λαμπρότατος ἡγεμών) in the Thebaid in the years 370–71 CE, attested by *P. Lips.* I, 58, lines 6–7, and by *SB* I, 4513, line 8, where he is mentioned as Flavius Domitianus without the name Antonius. His connections with Alexandria are unknown. 4) *PRLE* I, 403: Antonius Gregorius 7, v. p. *praeses* in the Thebaid in the document *CPR* I, 233, line 2, from Hermopolis Magna, dated to 313 CE; he is listed without the name Flavius. Again, his connections with Alexandria are unknown.

²¹ *PRLE* I, 900: Theodorus 22.

²² *POxy.* 67, lines 4, 8, 13.

²³ Athan. *Fest. Ep.* 10 s.a. 338, transl. Schaff and Wace 1892, 1271.

²⁴ Moser 2018, 103–4. According to Athanasius, Philagrius was reappointed because of the Arian interest to install an Arian bishop, Gregory, in place of himself; as claimed by Gregory of Nazianzus, it was due to the popularity of Philagrius among the Alexandrians. For more on why Philagrius was reappointed, see *PRLE* I, 694: Philagrius 5; Athan. *Fest. Ind.* s.a. 338; Greg. Naz. *Or.* 21.28.

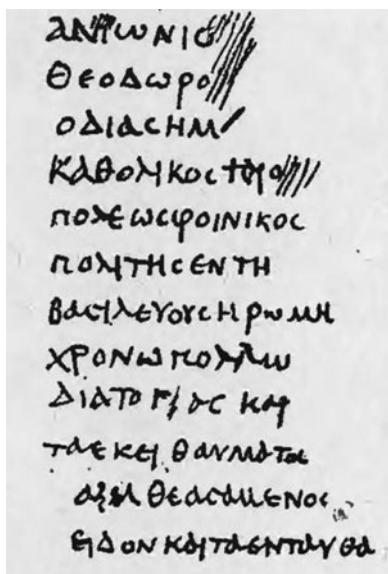


Fig. 8. Drawing of the dipinto mentioning *Ἀντώνιο[ς] Θεοδόρο[ς]* found in a corridor of the tomb of Ramesses VI (KV9) in the Valley of the Kings in Thebes. (Baillet 1926, pl. 48, no. 1249.)

Antonius Theodorus (Fig. 8),²⁵ while in the second he was described by another person simply as Theodorus (Fig. 9).²⁶ In both dipinti, he is defined as *καθολικός* (*rationalis*), but the first includes other information about his origin. To judge from this text it is clear that Flavius Antonius Theodorus was a native of the city of Heliopolis (Baalbek) in the province of Syria-Phoenicia. Prior to 335 CE,²⁷ he had served as a *rationalis* in Egypt, and undoubtedly while holding this office he had a chance to gain experience in central financial administration, which was required for a future prefect.²⁸ While in post, he traveled around Egypt and left two commemorative dipinti in Thebes. From the letter of Athanasius it may be inferred that in both 337 and 338 CE he served as prefect of Egypt, and the papyrus discussed above confirms this.

The form of the most complete of inscriptions from the baths at Kom el-Dikka adds further support to the argument that the text refers to the prefect. The decorative ligatures and harmonious letter composition of the monogram suggest that it was designed for the needs of the officium of the prefect, rather than for a private person who had merely bought a series of capitals on the secondhand market for a donation to a public building, which is the interpretation proposed by the editor princeps.²⁹ As the texts listed above show, Flavius Antonius Theodorus signed his name or was described in different ways (as Flavius Antonius Theodorus, Antonius Theodorus, or just Theodorus). Although the inscription from Kom el-Dikka does not include the name Theodorus, the combination of the abbreviated name Flavius, which emphasized his highest rank, and the name Antonius would seem sufficient to identify this as the prefect's monogram. Hypothetically, the mark consisting only of his name, Theodorus, would require additional clarification to make it clear that the inscription referred to the *ἐπαρχος*. In this case, the text would have ended up longer and would have been more laborious to engrave than a three-letter monogram.³⁰

²⁵ SB 1002; IGR I 5, 1211; Baillet 1926, 285–86, no. 1249; SEG XXXVIII 1852. Lines 1–6: Ἀντώνιο[ς] Θεοδόρο[ς], ὁ διασημ(ότατος) καθολικός, Ἡλιοπόλεως Φοίνικος πολίτης· ἐν τῇ βασιλευούσῃ Ῥώμῃ χρόνῳ πολλῷ διατρίψ[ι]ας, καὶ τὰ ἐκεῖ θαύματα ἄξια θεασάμενος, εἶδον καὶ τὰ ἐνταῦθα. The dipinto is dated to ca. 330 CE.

²⁶ SB 1909; Baillet 1926, 305–6, no. 1285; Bernard 1969, 544–45, no. 148; SEG XXXVIII 1852. Καθολικός Θεόδωρος ἀνήγαγεν ἐς τότε θαύμα ἡμε[ε]ίς ἐ[ν] δακε[τ]ήνηϊσιδομεν σοφίην. This dipinto is also dated to ca. 330 CE.

²⁷ SEG XXXVIII 1852.

²⁸ Brunt 1975, 136–41.

²⁹ Łukaszewicz 1990, 133.

³⁰ The observation that the inscription is in the form of a monogram was made in BE 1991, 93.

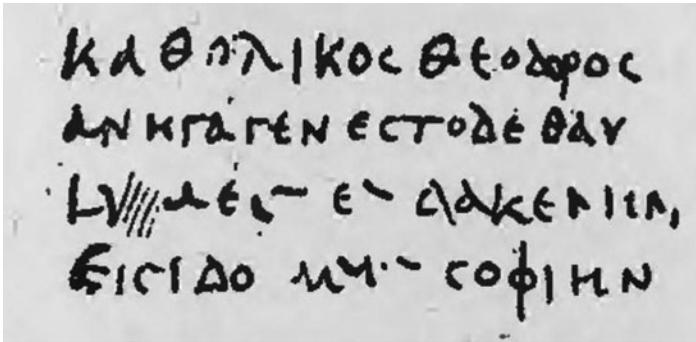


Fig. 9. Drawing of the dipinto mentioning *καθολικός Θεόδωρος* found in a corridor of the tomb of Ramesses VI (KV9) in the Valley of the Kings in Thebes. (Baillet 1926, pl. 42, no. 1285.)

Other examples of similar marks

Another argument for this inscription being the name of the prefect is provided by examples of inscribed marks on architectural blocks that refer to similar state interventions in other parts of the Roman Empire. The group of marks gathered by Giulia Marsili and labeled “*marchi di stoccaggio*” includes inscriptions placed on architectural elements at the time of their storage, often carved at the point of dismantling of earlier structures or following selection and purchase by a customer.³¹ At a regulatory level, the appropriation of *spolia* for both public and private building works had to be authorized,³² and we can observe this phenomenon in various inscribed marks with the names of people holding the highest offices.

A notable example is the inscribed mark *PAT DECI* preserved on the column drums of the peristyle of the temple of Mars Ultor in Rome.³³ These texts have been dated paleographically to Late Antiquity and linked to the noble family of the Caecina Deci, and more specifically to Caecina Mavortius Basilius Decius, *praefectus urbi*, *praefectus praetorio*, and consul in 486 CE.³⁴ According to a decree issued under Theodoric (r. 491–527 CE), this Decius owned a *domus* near the Porticus Curva – between the Forum of Augustus, where the temple of Mars Ultor was situated, and the Temple of Minerva in the Forum of Nerva – and applied for an extension of his house toward it. The marks *PAT DECI* could be related to this specific construction activity and provide evidence for direct purchase of the marble *spolia* from the state by a high-ranked person.³⁵

Further significant examples of inscribed marks of this sort have been found in Ostia, on both new marble column shafts and examples from dismantled earlier buildings.³⁶ These column shafts in cipollino and Proconnesian marble, of equal diameters, found together with octagonal plinths and Corinthian capitals, bear the marks *DNGF* (five items) and

³¹ Marsili 2019, 114–20.

³² *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.1–3, 11, 15–17, 19, 21, 29; Marsili 2019, 114.

³³ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenziani 2004, 179–80; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenziani 2007, 118; Meneghini 2015, 145.

³⁴ *PRLE* II, 349: Decius 2.

³⁵ After Marsili 2019, 115.

³⁶ Marsili 2019, 116, nos. 177–78.

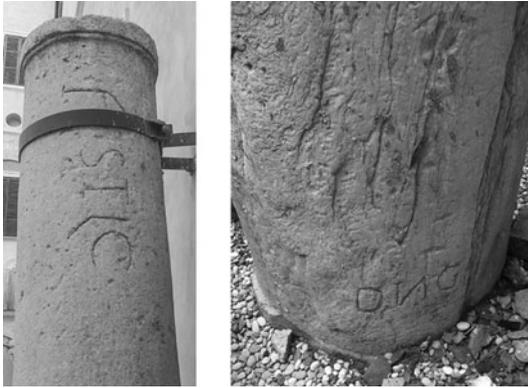


Fig. 10. Marble column shafts with the inscriptions *FLSTL* and *DNGE*, found in Ostia, now in the Palazzo Cesarini Sforza in Rome. (Marsili 2019, 117, fig. 64; courtesy of G. Marsili.)

magister militum, whose engagement in public construction is well known – would suggest that these valuable marble elements were ordered by the imperial household but that supervision of the project was carried out by a member of the aristocracy.³⁸ Also from Ostia are the bases, column shafts, and Ionic capitals found in a deposit in the courtyard of the collegiate temple of the Fabri Navales after its disassembly.³⁹ At least five elements are inscribed with the name *VOLUSIANI V(iri) C(larissimi)*, who has been identified as Rufus Antonius Agrypnius Volusianus,⁴⁰ *praefectus pretorio Italiae et Africanae* in 428–29 CE and *praefectus urbi* in 417–18 CE, rather than his ancestor C. Ceionius Rufus Volusianus Lampiadus,⁴¹ also *praefectus praetorio* and *praefectus urbi* between 355 and 365 CE.⁴²

The presence of individuals who held the role of *praefectus urbi* in these texts is notable. From the eastern Empire, we can point to a further example: this is the delivery mark on a column shaft of Docimian marble found in Constantinople in the Hagia Sophia lapidarium, which includes the text τοῦ ἐπάρχου (Fig. 11).⁴³ This indicates that the column was meant for a building commissioned by an urban prefect.⁴⁴ We know from other sources that construction activity and responsibility for control of building materials in both Rome and Constantinople was part of the duties of the *praefectus urbi*.⁴⁵ To judge from this evidence, it is reasonable to assume that the presence of the prefect of Egypt's name in marks inscribed on architectural elements from Alexandria shows that imperial construction activity fell within his range of his duties.

FLSTL (three items) (Fig. 10). These abbreviations have been reconstructed as *D(omini) N(ostri) G(ratiani) F(elicis)* and *Fl(avii) St(i)l(ichonis)*.³⁷ It has been proposed that the marble elements must have been intended for a single building project, but for whatever reason never used. This is evidenced by the partial finishing of the elements and the lack of dowel holes needed to actually erect them. The inscriptions with the names of both the emperor Gratian (r. 367–83) and Flavius Stilicho – *illustrissimum viro*, twice consul in 400 and 405 CE, and

³⁷ Pensabene 1994, 171–74, nos. 148–49, 180–81, 187, 192–93; Marsili 2019, 116–18.

³⁸ On Stilicho, see *PRLE* I, 853–58. See also Marsili 2019, 117.

³⁹ Pensabene 2007, 407–8.

⁴⁰ *PRLE* II, 1184–85: Volusianus 6.

⁴¹ *PRLE* I, 978–80.

⁴² Marsili 2019, 118; see also Pensabene 2007, 408–9; Baldini 2013, 84.

⁴³ Paribeni 2010, 117–18.

⁴⁴ Marsili 2014b, 814–15.

⁴⁵ Sztetyllo and Borkowski 1986, 652 n.18.



Fig. 11. Delivery mark *τῶ ἐπάρχου* carved on a column shaft in Docimian marble, Hagia Sophia Museum. (Marsili 2019, 97, fig. 50; courtesy of G. Marsili.)

Although not relating to a prefect, another example from Constantinople shows that inscribed names were used to designate batches of material to projects overseen by high level officials. These are the inscriptions reading *ANTIOXΟΥ ΠΡΕΠΟCΙΤΟΥ*, which were found on marble column bases in a building close to the hippodrome. They have been interpreted as referring to Antiochus, *praepositus sacri cubiculi* under Theodosius II, leading to the identification of the unearthed palatial structure as the Palace of Antiochus.⁴⁶

One final example of an inscribed mark, also from the eastern Empire, is worth mentioning here. This is the word *ΠΡΟΒΑΤ*, carved on eleven blocks reused on the northern façade of the outer wall of the Bouleuterion in Aphrodisias in Caria, which has been interpreted as Greek transliteration of a Latin past participle (*probat*), indicating an operation of control and official approval of reuse. It has been argued that these marks were added to blocks stored in building yards in order to confirm their acquisition by the government.⁴⁷ In her analysis of an inventory of columns preserved on papyrus, Arietta Papaconstantinou noted that there was a “clear separation between public and private property, and transferring building materials from one to the other was not straightforward, but subject to a formalized transaction.”⁴⁸ Even if part of the dismantled material did not end up being reused in another public building, these kinds of marks on them would indicate that they were to be sold for the benefit of the imperial treasury.

During the reign of either Constantine or Constantius II, legislation also guaranteed that revenues generated by civic property were confiscated by the *fiscus*.⁴⁹ Efforts made by local authorities to recover the city’s property by handing over building material to municipal construction supervisors (*ἐπιμεληταί*, *curatores operum publicorum*) are evidenced by the edict issued by a proconsul of Achaia, Publius Ampelius.⁵⁰ Alongside a range of other imperial edicts,⁵¹ all of this indicates that the Ionic capitals at Kom el-Dikka were probably labeled with the name of the prefect of Egypt just after the dismantling of the

⁴⁶ Duyuran 1953, 75; Marsili 2014a; Marsili 2019, 94–96.

⁴⁷ Chaniotis 2008, 68; cf. Reynolds 2008, 175. For discussion of two interpretations of the inscription, see Marsili 2019, 114.

⁴⁸ *P London* III 755; Papaconstantinou 2013, 225.

⁴⁹ Jones 1964, 732 and 1301 n.44.

⁵⁰ *IG XII*, 9, line 907, after Chaniotis et al. forthcoming.

⁵¹ Particularly interesting is the edict of December 2, 362 CE, *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.8, addressed to a prefect of Egypt, Icdicius, ordering that “the official residences of judges (governor of provinces or high officials) and houses used for judicial purposes ought to have been vindicated to public ownership and use” (transl. Pharr 1952, 424). This ordinance clearly emphasizes that imperial public buildings were not supposed to be used for any other purposes.

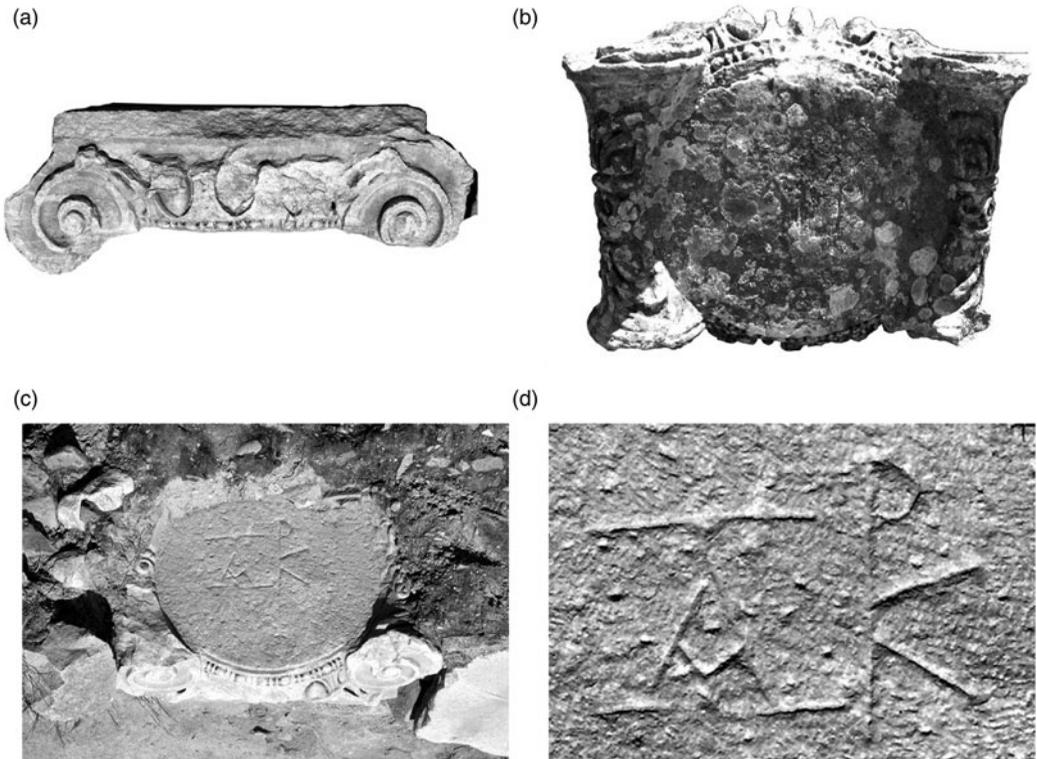


Fig. 12. Two Ionic capitals carved by workers from Asia Minor with stonemason's mark APK. Their original use was assigned to the first phase of the nymphaeum in Gortyn. (Livadotti 2019, 328, fig. 79 a–f; courtesy and copyright of the Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene.)

structure to which they previously belonged. The marks identified them as originating from a ruined public building and so public property, which meant that they should be reused in another public construction.

There is one more explanation for the marks $\Phi\Lambda$ ANT, which should be at least be touched upon here: the possibility that they indicate the identity of the workshop originally responsible for carving the capitals. As noted above, the Ionic capitals have been interpreted as imports from Asia Minor dated to the 1st or early 2nd c. CE.⁵² An interesting possible parallel could be the two Ionic capitals in white marble found at Gortyn (h. 0.2 m, diam. 0.52 m, w. 0.77 m), which are inscribed with the mark APK on the underside (Fig. 12). They have also been interpreted as works produced by craftsmen from Asia Minor and dated to the second half of the 2nd c. CE.⁵³ Despite the general similarity of these two Ionic capitals to the examples from Alexandria, and the fact that their inscriptions are also located on their undersides, however, a broader analysis of the inscribed marks of workshops from the Early Byzantine period shows that they usually refer to the name of a single producer or the supervisor responsible for the delivery of the product;⁵⁴ these marks also usually consist of one to five letters or a monogram, generally

⁵² Pensabene 1993, 341, nos. 124–25.

⁵³ Livadotti 2019, 326–28, no. 79, fig. 80.

⁵⁴ Marsili 2019, 120–84.

linked to that person's proper name.⁵⁵ It seems highly unlikely that the noble name Flavius would refer to the owner of a stonemason's workshop or a contractor responsible for delivery. Moreover, paleographic analysis of the letters of the ΦΛ ANT text suggest that it was added in the Late Roman period, long after the capitals were carved. The practice of high officials assuming the name of Flavius after 324 CE seems to corroborate this dating.

Finally, examples of analogous marks carved on various construction elements at Aphrodisias have recently been interpreted by Angelos Chaniotis.⁵⁶ He has connected the abbreviations AAB, AABIN (on eight plaques of the pavement of the West Stoa in the Place of Palms), ANIE (on the surface of three bases from the Sebasteion), and KΩ (on six blocks used for construction of Late Antique city walls) to the names of sponsors of building projects mentioned in other inscriptions: Albinus, sponsor of the West Stoa;⁵⁷ Flavius Ampelius, a well-known overseer of various building activities in the second half of the 5th c. CE,⁵⁸ and the governor Flavius Constantius, who oversaw the building of the city walls.⁵⁹ It is worth emphasizing that none of these abbreviated texts contain a reference to the dignity, rank, or title of these men. Nevertheless, Chaniotis firmly rules out interpreting these marks as naming the owners of workshops or leaseholders of quarries, and proposes instead that these texts should be read as "for (the project) of Albinus, Ampelius, or Constantius," or, more likely, "acquired by or on behalf of," because in many cases they were carved on recycled building material. I would argue that the marks on the Ionic capitals from the baths at Kom el-Dikka should be interpreted in exactly the same way.

The prefect of Egypt and the construction of public buildings

If the interpretation of the inscribed marks on the capitals outlined above is correct, it seems to indicate that the prefect was involved in the construction of the baths, presumably at the request of the emperor or with his blessing. With this in mind, what can we say about the prefect's duties relating to the construction of public buildings? These are difficult to determine precisely at the beginning of the 4th c. CE.⁶⁰ Certainly, he would have presided over a vast administrative bureaucracy centered in Alexandria and would have governed subordinate financial officers – such as the *rationales*, *magistri privatae*, *procuratores privatae*, *procuratores monetae Alexandriae*, *ensitores*, and *logistes* – responsible for the finances and administration of particular towns.⁶¹ A prefect would have exercised control over nearly every aspect of life in the province of Egypt. Therefore, it is possible that the control and approval of construction material in Alexandria, reclaimed from demolished structures, was also among the duties of this office. At the same time, based on the extant documentation, it is not possible to pinpoint the extent to which municipal authorities, as opposed

⁵⁵ Marsili 2019, 120 n.212.

⁵⁶ I owe these references to Angelos Chaniotis: see Chaniotis et al. forthcoming.

⁵⁷ *IAph2007* 4.20; 4.21, VI, VIII, IX, X, XIII, XV, XVI, XVII, XIX, XX.

⁵⁸ These included restoration of a "palaestra" (*IAph2007* 2.19), the Place of Palms (*IAph2007* 4.202), a gate (*IAph2007* 12.101) and the Theater Baths (*IAph2007* 8.609).

⁵⁹ *IAph2007* 6.4; 12.101, I a.

⁶⁰ Bagnall 1996, 64.

⁶¹ Lallemand 1964; Haas 2006, 72–73.

to the prefect, oversaw public construction in this period in Egypt.⁶² The situation in Alexandria presents particular challenges due to the lack of papyrological sources.

Three earlier documents from elsewhere in Egypt do offer some insight into the involvement of prefects with the construction of baths. A papyrus dated to 128 CE contains a letter from the prefect Flavius Titianus to the town of Oxyrhynchus and a building permit for a set of baths, which were to be financed from funds already collected.⁶³ Another papyrus, dated to 107 CE, provides a financial report for a project involving the reconstruction of baths and construction of a road, for which 16 talents were given by Herakleides, the *strategos* of Hermoupolis, while a further 70 talents were allocated by the prefect Vibius Maximus.⁶⁴ The document also states that these costs were to be covered by municipal funds previously collected for projects in another town. The third papyrus, dated to 306 CE, reveals that the prefect Clodius Culcianus instructed his subordinate official, the *prytaneus*, to allocate 50 talents from the town's funds to finance the baths and to cover other costs related to the *prytaneia*.⁶⁵ These examples show that the competences of a prefect included approval of decisions and allocation of funds for the construction of public baths. Owing to the imperial nature of the baths at Kom el-Dikka, in this case it seems more convincing that the funds for the construction project came from a special donation made to the city by an emperor rather than from municipal accounts.⁶⁶

In this context, one further official cannot be ignored: numerous papyrus sources show that the construction of public buildings in Egyptian *metropoleis* was entrusted to *curators* called either *epimeletes* or *logistes*.⁶⁷ Among the tasks overseen by these officials were securing construction sites, purchasing materials, sometimes even extraction of stones or cutting of trees, agreeing contracts with those carrying out the work, assessing construction costs, and reporting on expenses.⁶⁸ These officials, however, as is clear from a number of other texts, were overseers of building projects;⁶⁹ unlike the prefect they were not in charge of approving projects or allocating funds.

Finally, the sources certify that in the field of public works the prefects of Egypt had a certain tendency to neglect maintenance works in favor of new constructions.⁷⁰ The building of imperial baths at Alexandria and the wholesale reorganization of the greater part of the *insula* in which they were situated, were projects significant enough to match the competences and ambitions of the prefect of Egypt.

Contribution to the dating of the baths building

The interpretation of the inscribed mark ΦΛ ANT as the name of the prefect of Egypt Flavius Antonius Theodorus has important implications for the dating of the Kom

⁶² Łukaszewicz 2018, 90.

⁶³ *POxy.* XLIII, 3088, lines 10–13.

⁶⁴ *P. Amh.* II, 64, lines 2–3, 6–7.

⁶⁵ *P. Amh.* II, 64, lines 2–3, 6–7. See Łukaszewicz 2018, 72–84.

⁶⁶ Jones 1937, 278–80; Jones 1940, 236; Łukaszewicz 2018, 78.

⁶⁷ Łukaszewicz 2018, 91–92, no. 607.

⁶⁸ Dio Chrys. *Or.* 40.7–9; Plut. *Prae. ger. reip.* 15; Jones 1940, 238; Łukaszewicz 2018, 90.

⁶⁹ *P. Amh.* II, 64, line 12; *OGIS* 722, lines 10–12; Feissel 2017, 479.

⁷⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.20; Lallemand 1964, 69–70.

el-Dikka baths. This individual was appointed to the office of prefect by the emperor Constantine, probably at the beginning of 337 CE. He was then replaced in this role in 338 CE, under Constantius II.⁷¹ During the short-term of his prefecture, on May 22, 337 CE, the reign of Constantine came to an end. It is highly unlikely that one of the heirs of Constantine would decide to reorganize this entire quarter in Alexandria in such a short time and begin the construction of the baths immediately following the death of his father.⁷² Therefore, the hypothesis already proposed by Łukaszewicz on the basis of the archaeological evidence and the two preserved letters (TA) of the monumental inscription (Fig. 6) – that the construction of the baths at Kom el-Dikka was initiated upon the order of Constantine – becomes all the more convincing.⁷³ The construction of the baths would have started before the emperor's death and during the prefecture of Flavius Antonius Theodorus, which would mean that it was already underway in the first half of 337 CE.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Prof. Monika Rekowski (University of Warsaw), Prof. Grzegorz Majcherek (Director of Research at Kom el-Dikka, the Polish Center of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw), Prof. Adam Łajtar (University of Warsaw), and Prof. Angelos Chaniotis (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), and my colleagues Dr. Paweł Nowakowski (University of Warsaw) and Dr. Ulf Weber (Independent Researcher) for their careful readings of this article and valuable comments; their positive impact on the overall quality of my research cannot be overstated. I also thank Maciej Talaga for the first-language proofreading of this paper.

References

- Bagnall, R. 1996. *Egypt in Late Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Baillet, J. 1926. *Inscriptions grecques et latines des tombeaux des rois ou syringes à Thèbes*. MIFAO 42/2. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- Baldini, I. 2013. "L'architettura urbana come spazio politico e sociale." In *Potere e politica nell'età della famiglia teodosiana (395-455). I linguaggi dell'impero, le identità dei barbari*, ed. I. Baldini and S. Cosentino, 65–85. Bari: Edipuglia.
- Bernard, É. 1969. *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte*. Besançon: Université de Franche-Comté.
- Breccia, E. 1922. *Alexandria ad Ægyptum: A Guide to the Ancient and Modern Town, and to its Graeco-Roman Museum*. Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche.
- Brunt, P. A. 1975. "The administrators of Roman Egypt." *JRS* 65: 124–47.
- Calderini, A. 1973. *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano*. Vol. I, II. ed. S. Daris. Milan: Cisalpino – La Goliardica.
- Chaniotis, A. 2008. "Twelve buildings in search of a location: Unidentified buildings in the inscriptions of Aphrodisias." In *Aphrodisias Papers 4: New Research on the City and Its Monuments*, ed. C. Roueché and R. R. Smith, 61–78. JRA Suppl. 70. Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology.
- Chaniotis, A., Wilson, A., and B. Russell. Forthcoming. "Informal writing, drawing and carving in the Place of Palms." In *The Place of Palms: An Urban Park at Aphrodisias*, ed. A. Wilson and B. Russell. Wiesbaden: Reichert.

⁷¹ Athan. *Fest. Ep.* 10 s.a. 338; Athan. *Fest. Ind.* s.a. 338. Moser 2018, 103–4.

⁷² McEvoy 2020, 302. Generally, little can be said about the relationships between Constantine's sons, Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans and the imperial towns under their control or building projects initiated by them. It is only known that for the first thirteen years after 337, the towns of Trier, Arles, Milan, Naissus, and Sirmium were favored by the young emperors of the West, while Antioch was privileged by Constantius II.

⁷³ Łukaszewicz 1990, 135–6 n.3; *SEG* XL 1555.

The baths at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria as a foundation of Constantine the Great?

- Duyuran, R. 1953. "Second report on excavations on the site of the New Palace of Justice at Istanbul." *IstArkMüzYill* 6: 74–80.
- Gascou, J. 2012. "La σμασία P.Oxy. XXXIV 2719 et le paysage urbain d'Alexandrie." *ChrÉg* 87: 308–18.
- Feissel, D. 2017. "Trois fonctions municipales dans l'épigraphie protobizantine (*curator, defensor, pater civitatis*)." In *The Epigraphic Cultures of Late Antiquity*, ed. K. Bolle, C. Machado, and C. Witschel, 473–500. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Fournet, T., and B. Redon. 2017. "Romano-Byzantine baths of Egypt, the birth and spread of a little-known regional model." In *Collective Baths in Egypt 2. New Discoveries and Perspectives: Ebalaneia, thermae, hammamat*, ed. B. Redon, 279–322. *Études urbaines* 10. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.
- Haas, C. 2006. *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Johnson, A. C. 1950. "Lutius Domitius Domitianus Augustus." *CP* 45: 31–21.
- Jones, A. H. M. 1937. *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Jones, A. H. M. 1940. *The Greek Cities from Alexander to Justinian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jones, A. H. M. 1964. *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Kazhadan, A. 1991. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Keenan, J. G. 1974. "The names Flavius and Aurelius as status designations in Later Roman Egypt." *ZPE* 13: 283–304.
- Kiss, Z., G. Majcherek, H. Meyza, H. Rysiewski, and B. Tkaczow. 2000. *Fouilles polonaises à Kôm el-Dikka (1986–1987), Alexandrie VII*. Warsaw: Zakład Archeologii Śródziemnomorskiej Polskiej Akademii Nauk.
- Kiss, Z. 2007. "Alexandria in the fourth to seventh centuries." In *Egypt in the Byzantine World*, ed. R. Bagnall, 187–206. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kołątaj, W. 1992. *Imperial Baths at Kom el-Dikka, Alexandrie VI*. Warsaw: Zakład Archeologii Śródziemnomorskiej Polskiej Akademii Nauk.
- Kołątaj, W., G. Majcherek, and E. Parandowska. 2007. *Villa of the Birds: The Excavation and Preservation of the Kom al-Dikka Mosaics*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Lallemand, J. 1964. *L'administration civile de l'Égypte de l'avènement de Dioclétien à la création du diocèse (284–382). Contribution à l'étude des rapports entre l'Égypte et l'Empire à la fin du IIIe et au IVe siècle*. Paris: Palais des Académies.
- Livadotti, M. 2019. "Catalogo degli elementi architettonici." In *Gortina VIII. L'isolato del ninfeo. La topografia, i monumenti e lo scavo (campagne 2003–2008)*, ed. E. Lippolis, L. M. Calìo, and C. Giatti, 295–332. Athens: Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene.
- Łukaszewicz, A. 1990. "Fragmenta Alexandrina I: Some inscriptions from the Roman baths at Kom el Dikka." *ZPE* 82: 133–36.
- Łukaszewicz, A. 2018. *Les édifices publics dans les villes de l'Égypte romaine. Problèmes administratifs et financiers*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Majcherek, G. 1995. "Notes on the Alexandrian habitat: Roman and Byzantine houses from Kom el-Dikka." *Topoi* 5: 133–50.
- Majcherek, G. 2010. "The auditoria on Kom el-Dikka: A glimpse of Late Antique education in Alexandria." In *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology, Ann Arbor 2007, American Studies in Papyrology*, ed. T. Gagos and A. Hyatt, 471–84. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library.
- Marsili, G. 2014a. "La committenza architettonica attraverso i marchi dei marmorari: il caso del Palazzo di Antioco a Costantinopoli." In *La villa restaurata e i nuovi studi sull'Edilizia abitativa tardoantica nel Mediterraneo (CISEM), Piazza Armerina, 7–10 novembre 2012*, ed. P. Pensabene and C. Sfameni, 181–89. Bari : Edipuglia.
- Marsili, G. 2014b. "Imperial patronage of marble columns between the Principate and Late Antiquity." In *Centre and periphery in the ancient world. Proceedings XVIIIth International Congress of Classical Archaeology. Mérida, 13–17 mayo 2013*, ed. J. M. Álvarez Martínez, T. Nogales Basarrate, and I. Rodà Llanza, 813–16. Mérida: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano.
- Marsili, G. 2019. *Archeologia del cantiere protobizantino. Cave, maestranze e committenti attraverso i marchi dei marmorari*. Bologna: Bononia University Press.

- McEvoy, M. 2020. "Imperial cities under the sons of Constantine." In *The Sons of Constantine, AD 337–361: In the Shadows of Constantine and Julian*, ed. N. J. Baker-Brian and S. Tougher, 275–307. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McKenzie, J. 2007. *The architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 700*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Meneghini, R. 2015. "Fori Imperiali: testimonianze di attività produttive medievali." In *L'archeologia della produzione a Roma (secoli V–XV). Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Roma, 27–29 marzo 2014)*, ed. A. Molinari, R. S. Valenzani, and L. Spera, 143–51. Bari: Edipuglia.
- Meneghini, R., and R. S. Valenziani. 2004. *Roma nell'altomedioevo. Topografia e urbanistica della città dal V al X secolo*. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato.
- Meneghini, R., and R. S. Valenziani. 2007. *I Fori Imperiali. Gli scavi del Comune di Roma (1991–2007)*. Rome: Viviani.
- Moser, M. 2018. *Emperor and Senators in the Reign of Constantius II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Papaconstantinou, A. 2013. "A fourth-century inventory of columns and the Late Roman building industry." In *Papyrological Texts in Honor of Roger S. Bagnall*, ed. R. Ast, H. Cuvigny, T. Hickey, and J. Lougovaya, 215–31. Durham, NC: American Society of Papyrologists.
- Paribeni, A. 2010. "The artist's signature: marble masons' marks." In *The Sculpture of the Ayasofya Müzesi in Istanbul: A Short Guide*, ed. C. Barsanti and A. Giuglia, 113–18. Istanbul: Ege Yayınları.
- Pensabene, P. 1993. *Elementi architettonici di Alessandria e di altri siti egiziani. Repertorio d'arte dell'Egitto greco-romano, serie C, vol. III*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- Pensabene, P. 1994. *La vie del marmo. I blocchi di cava di Roma e di Ostia. Il fenomeno del marmo nella Roma antica (Itinerari ostiensi VII)*. Rome: Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, Soprintendenza Archeologica di Ostia.
- Pensabene, P. 2007. *Ostiensum marmorum decus et decor. Studi architettonici, decorativi e archeometrici, Studi miscellanei 33*. Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- Pharr, C. 1952. *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions: A translation with commentary, glossary, and bibliography*. In collaboration with T. S. Davidson, M. B. Pharr, and C. D. Williams. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- PRLE I = Jones, A. H. M., J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris. 1971. *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, Volume 1, A.D. 260–395*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PRLE II = Martindale, J. R. 1980. *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, Volume 2, A.D. 395–527*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reynolds, J. M. 2008. "Inscriptions from the bouleterion/odeion." In *Aphrodisias Papers 4: New Research on the City and Its Monuments*, ed. C. Roueché and R. R. R. Smith, 169–89. JRA Suppl. 70. Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology.
- Rodziewicz, M. 1984. *Alexandrie III. Les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie à la lumière de fouilles polonaises à Kômm el-Dikka*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Schaff, P., and H. Wace. 1892. *A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, second series, vol. IV: Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*. Grand Rapids, MI: W. M. B. Eerdmans.
- Sztetyllo, Z., and Z. Borkowski. 1986. "Un timbre céramique byzantin de l'éparque de Constantinople." In *Recherches sur les amphores grecques*, ed. J.-Y. Empereur and Y. Garlan, 649–54. BCH Suppl. 13. Paris: Édition de Boccard.
- Tkaczow, B. 1993. *Topography of Ancient Alexandria: An Archaeological Map*. Warsaw: Centre d'archéologie méditerranéenne de l'Académie polonaise des sciences.
- Tkaczow, B. 2008. *Architectural Styles of Ancient Alexandria: Elements of Architectural Decoration from Polish Excavations at Kom el-Dikka (1960–1993)*. Warsaw: Zakład Archeologii Śródziemnomorskiej Polskiej Akademii Nauk.