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Numismatic Evidence for the Revolt of Domitius Domitianus

The *tetradrachm* and its fractions had been the coinage of Egypt since the reign of Ptolemy I. It was central to the region's unique economic system. In late August 296, it ceased. At about the same time and in its place, Diocletian introduced imperial coinage, including *nummi* with the *Genio Populi Romani* reverse (Bagnall [1985]; Howgego [1995]). Shortly thereafter, Domitius Domitianus revolted, eventually gaining control of Alexandria and seizing the imperial mint. There, he struck *aurei*, *nummi* and the extremely rare half *nummus* with an eagle on the reverse, and reintroduced pre-reform denominations (*didrachms*, *tetradrachms*, and *octodrachms*) bearing the regnal date "Year 2". This revolt, however, was short-lived; after a siege of almost eight months, Diocletian recaptured Alexandria and Domitius Domitianus disappeared.

While the revolt of Domitius Domitianus has periodically received scholarly attention (Schwartz [1975]; Thomas and Geissen, *ZPE* 22 [1976]; Kolb, *Eos* 76 [1988]), the silence and apparent confusion of the literary sources about the event's nature and details has attached a singular importance to the available documentary (*P.Panop.Beatty* 1; *P.Mich.*1369) and, more specifically, the numismatic evidence. Despite this apparent importance, however, (Metcalf [1987]), and the publication of general studies of imperial Alexandrian coinage (Dattari [1901]; Milne [1933]; Curtis [1969]), a detailed study of the issues of Domitius Domitianus is virtually non-existent (cf. Lallemand, *Revue de Numismatique Belge* 97 [1951]). Although some scholars have challenged the role of numismatic evidence in offering a solution to the problem (Schwartz; Metcalf), I will argue that a detailed die-study of the coinage of Domitius Domitianus is necessary and contributes important new evidence by demonstrating that, in addition to a similarity between his *nummi* and those of the tetrarchs, his Greek and Latin issues were interconnected, their output was larger than previously suspected, and the sequence of *nummi* proposed by Sutherland requires revisiting. Furthermore, I will suggest that Domitius Domitianus' use of the eagle on the reverse of the *Genio Populi Romani* issue and his reintroduction of the pre-reform coinage of Alexandria with Serapis reverses—a specifically local image—may have been designed to rally Egyptians hostile to Diocletian's reforms and resentful of losing their province's long-standing privileges, and that Diocletian's continued use of the eagle reverse for his *nummi* upon his suppression of the revolt and retaking control of the mint may have been a temporary, though for the time, necessary continuance on the part of the imperial government.