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## GROUP OF "AFRICAN" OIL-LAMPS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN CRACOW

The so-called African lamps distinguishable at first glance among late antique oil lamps form a very specific group. They are characterized by the intense brick red of very hard fired clay, but sometimes occur orange, brownish or even greyish colour. These lamps have wide shoulders ornamented with floral or geometrical decoration, a wide straight channel finished with a big wick-hole, a full vertical handle and slightly convexed discus mainly with two fillingholes. The relief decoration is flat in general although some parts occur in very high relief. The difference results from the degree of usage of the mold or the state of preservation of a given lamp. The decoration of the discus often represents elements taken from christian iconography<sup>1</sup>: crosses (mainly Greek equal-armed), Christ's monogram<sup>2</sup>, fish, peacocks, pigeons etc., as well as Old Testament scenes. The decoration of the shoulders usually is limited to herringbone designs, which by similarity to palm branches also represent a symbolic significance. Other decoration on the shoulder are triangles, squares, circles, hearts or wine scroll.

This type of lamp developed at the beginning of the IV century A. D. and their production, after a peak of development in the next century, decays in the VI century A. D.

<sup>1</sup> Because of the details of decoration "African" lamps are often called "Christian". This is not precise since they have also elements in the ornamentation which have nothing in common with the christian iconography. Cf. M. L. Bernhard, *Lampki starożytne*, Warszawa 1955, Cat. Nos. 349—352; Szentleleky, Nos. 232—234.

<sup>2</sup> The letter "rho" composing a chrismon on many artifacts (among them on lamps also) often is turned to the left in opposition to coins where it is always to the right. In different regions it takes the shape of closed loop (Italy, Spain, Brittany, Africa), or an open loop (Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Greece). This can be used as a criteria when establishing the place of the origin of the artifact. See M. A. Frantz, *The Provenance of the Open Rho in the Christian Monograms*, AJA XXXIII, 1929, pp. 10—26.

Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco are the places where these lamps are most often found and this is the reason why they were called conventionally "African", although this is not completely true. Such lamps were produced in Alexandria, from where they were distributed to various parts of the Mediterranean Basin<sup>3</sup>. Among others they were found in Corinth<sup>4</sup>, Rome<sup>5</sup>, Miletos<sup>6</sup>, testifying the great popularity of this type of ceramic ware and of the considerable manufacturing capabilities of the Alexandrian workshops. The best typology of ancient lamps was given by Broneer<sup>7</sup> and according to his classification African group is known as "type XXXI" deriving from "type XXVIII" which is a transitional form between lamps of the II century A.D. and late antique lamps. Also a short account about African lamps is given by Hayes in his book concerning Late Roman Pottery<sup>8</sup>.

There are 14 "African" lamps among the 178 ancient oil lamps preserved in the collection of the National Museum in Cracow. Half of them originates from the Czartoryski Collection. There is a lack of information about the place they were discovered, while it is known that they were bought by Władysław Czartoryski in the years 1878—1893 probably at an auction sale in Paris. Five lamps originate from the collection of Antoni Grubissich<sup>9</sup> and they were found in the terrain of ancient Carthage. The other two lamps (a donation of Joseph Poller in 1889 and Leon Kostka in 1949) have not been established their origin.

<sup>3</sup> H. A. Thompson, *Terracotta Lamps*, Hesperia 2, 1933, pp. 210—212.

<sup>4</sup> O. Broneer, *Corinth. Results of Excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*. Volume IV, Part II. *Terracotta Lamps*, Cambridge, Mass. 1930.

<sup>5</sup> Menzel, *op. cit.*, Nos. 594, 599, 600, 605, 612—614, 616—617, 619—620.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, No. 603.

<sup>7</sup> Broneer, *op. cit.*, passim.

<sup>8</sup> J. W. Hayes, *Late Roman Pottery*, London 1972, chapter IV, African Lamps, pp. 310—314, „Tripolitanian” Lamps, pp. 314—315.

<sup>9</sup> J. Śliwa, *Kolekcja zabytków punickich w Krakowie*, ZNUJ, Prace Archeologiczne z. 19, Kraków 1974, pp. 49—55; idem, *Kolekcja Antoniego Grubissicha w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie*, Meander XIX, 1974, pp. 187—197.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Broneer — O. Broneer, *Corinth*, Vol. IV. Part II. *Terracotta Lamps*, Cambridge/Mass. 1930
- DAO — F. Cabrol—D. H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archeologie chretienne et de la liturgie*, vol. VIII/1, Paris 1932, s.v. *Lampes*
- Delattre — A. L. Delattre, *Musée Lavignerie de St. Louis de Carthage*, Paris 1900
- Forrer — E. Forrer, *Die frühchristlichen Alterthümer aus der Gräberfelde von Achmin-Panopolis*, Strassburg 1893
- Garrucci — R. Garrucci, *Storia della Arte Cristiana nei primi otto secoli della Chiesa*, vol. VI, Prato 1880
- Hanoune — R. Hanoune, *Lampes de Graviscae*, *Melanges d'Archeologie et d'Histoire*, vol. 82, Paris 1970, pp. 237—262
- Menzel — H. Menzel, *Antike Lampen in Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseum zu Mainz*, Mainz 1954
- Niessen — *Beschreibung Römischer Alterthümer gesammelt von Carl Anton Niessen*, Köln 1911.
- Ponsich — M. Ponsich, *Lampes romaines de Carthage*, RA 1960, 2, pp. 170—180
- Szentleleky — T. Szentleleky, *Ancient Lamps*, Budapest 1969

## CATALOGUE

## 1. One-wick lamp

Red clay. Length: 0.137, width: 0.082 m. Czartoryski Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-5. IV—Vc.A.D.



Round lamp with a long nozzle framed by two vanishing volutes. Slightly convexed discus with two filling-holes. In between, a monogram of Christ (letter "rho" turned to the left). On the wide shoulders are decorations with an alternate composition of rosettes and four-petaled flowers. Vertical handle changing on the body in two incised volutes extending to the bottom ring. Good condition; smoked wick-hole.

Cf. Broneer, No. 1453, Fig. 202; volutes on the body: Menzel, No. 612; Hanoune, No. 56, No. 61.

## 2. One-wick lamp



Red clay with grey coating. Length: 0.122, width: 0.078 m. Czartoryski Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-8. IV—Vc.A.D.

Pear-shaped body. Slightly convex disc decorated with a monogrammed cross (letter "rho" turned to the left). Two filling-holes between its arms. A convex channel joins the disc with a large wick-hole. The wide shoulders herring-bone ornamented. Vertical handle. On the base a circle with a letter "P". Good condition.

Cf. Menzel, No. 616; Szentleleky, No. 235.

## 3. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length: 0.107, width: 0.073 m. Czartoryski Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-850. IV—Vc.A.D.

Pear-shaped body. Wide shoulders decorated with curling plants. Flat disc with two small filling-holes, decorated with a monogrammed cross (letter "rho" to the right) with small granules. Three concentric rings at the bottom. Handle and nozzle broken away.

Cf. Broneer, No. 1463, Pl. XXI.

## 4. One-wick lamp

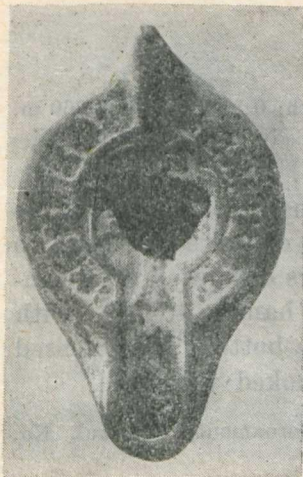


Red clay. Length: 0.107, width: 0.058 m. Czartoryski Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-1283. IV—Vc.A.D.

Elongated lamp with wide shoulders decorated with short deep cuttings, surrounded by two incised lines (simplified version of the herring-bone ornamentation). In a slightly concave disc two large filling-holes and a monogrammed cross (letter "rho" turned to the right) decorated with small, straight notches. Elongated nozzle. Vertical handle separated in the middle by an incised line. It follows the base in a carved loop. Part of a nozzle broken away.

Cf. Menzel, No. 616; Szentleleky, No. 239b, 242b (base).

## 5. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length: 0.135, width: 0.075 m. Grubissich Collection. Found on the terrain of Carthage. Inv. No. MNK XI-A-82 (f. 123868). IV—V c.A.D.

Elongated lamp with wide shoulders decorated with carved circles and stylized four-petaled flowers. On slightly concave discus a monogrammed cross (letter "rho" turned to the left). Wide nozzle with a big wick-hole. Vertical handle. Large hole in the middle of the discus, an ornament on the shoulders partly smudged, smoked wick-hole.

Cf. Broneer, No. 1463, Pl. XXI; Szentleleky, No. 235; Forrer, Vol. III, Fig. 15; *DAC*, Figs. 6562, 6565.

## 6. One-wick lamp

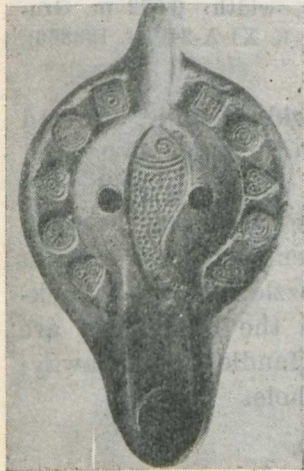


Yellow-brown clay. Length: 0.110 m, width: 0.065 m. Leon Kostka Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-A-97 (f. 160502). IV—Vc.A.D.

Lamp with elongated body, wide shoulders decorated alternatively with squares filled with granules and circles with inscribed rhombs. In a slightly concave discus a large hole does not allow to read the decoration (probably a monogrammed cross with the letter "rho" turned right). Long and wide nozzle finished with a large wick-hole. Vertical handle. Large hole in the discus.

Cf. Szentleleky, No. 235, 236; *DAC*, Figs. 6562, 6565; Delattre, Pl. X, 3; Forrer, Pl. V, 3 (an ornament on the shoulders).

## 7. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length: 0.145, width: 0.083 m. Grubissich Collection. Found on the terrain of Carthage. Inv. No. MNK XI-A-75 (f. 123865). IV—Vc.A.D.

Elongated lamp with wide shoulders decorated with squares, circles and hearts with internal geometrical ornamentation. On a slightly concave discus a fish is shown between two filling holes. Wide nozzle finished with a large wick-hole. The sign  $\wedge$  at the bottom. Vertical handle with a rib extended to the base-ring. Good condition, smoked wick-hole.

Cf. Menzel, No. 599 (different ornament on the shoulders); Delattre, Pl. VIII, 6.

## 8. One-wick lamp



Brown-yellow clay. Length: 0.102, width: 0.060 m. Czartoryski Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-6. IV—Vc. A. D.

Lamp with elongated body. Slightly concave discus with representation of a bird between two filling-holes. The shoulders decorated with concentric circles. Vertical handle divided with deep cuttings, runs to the bottom in an incised loop. Good condition, smoked wick-hole.

Cf. Niessen, No. 2126 (ornament); Menzel, No. 616, Abb. 79, 6.

## 9. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length: 0.087, width: 0.075 m. Czartoryski Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-849. IV-Vc. A. D.

Lamp with a slightly oval body. On the discus between two filling-holes a bird in the left profile is represented. Wide nozzle. Vertical handle divided with deep cuttings runs to the bottom in an incised loop. On the base three circles, the middle composed by two concentric rings. The nozzle and part of the body broken away, traces of smoke.

Cf. Menzel, No. 613, Abb. 79, 2 (type and decoration of shoulders).

## 10. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length: 0.125, width: 0.072 m. Grubbisich Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-A-240 (f. 123866). IV—Vc. A. D.

Elongated lamp with wide shoulders framed with convex roll. On the shoulders stylized hearts and fragments of vines plaited in "s" curves. On a slightly concave discus between two filling holes is representation of a cock in the right profile. Wide nozzle with a big wick-hole. Thick base-ring. On the base there are traces of scratched clay. Handle broken away; smoked nozzle and wick-hole.

Cf. Delattre, Pl. VIII, 9.

## 11. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length; 0.112, width: 0.08 m. Czartoryski Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-409. IV—Vc.A.D.

Elongated lamp with wide shoulders decorated with herring-bone ornament. On a concave disc between two filling-holes a rabbit(?) running is represented. Wide channel finished with a large wick-hole. Vertical handle divided in the middle by deep cuttings changing on the body in volutes. Good condition; smoked wick-hole.

Cf. Hanoune, No. 46; Forrer, t. II, 11.

## 12. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length: 0.105 m, width: 0.065 m. Grubbisich Collection. Inv. No. MNK XI-A-92 (f. 123867). IV—Vc.A.D.

Elongated lamp with shoulders decorated with a herring-bone ornament, neglectfully executed. On a slightly concave disc a stylized cross composed of two fragments of tendril (vertical arms) and two hearts (horizontal arms). In the place of the joint there are four concentric circles. Under horizontal arms two filling-holes. Vertical handle. On the base incised letter "B". Nozzle broken away; large part of the body is smoked.

Cf. inscription — Broneer, No. 1484, Pl. XXXIII

## 13. One-wick lamp



Red clay. Length: 0.132 m, width: 0.075 m. Grubbisich Collection. Inv. No. MNKXI-A-78 (f. 123864). IV—Vc.A.D.

Elongated lamp with wide shoulders decorated with indecipherable ornament. On slightly concave disc a bird in the left profile. Upon and under it filling-holes. Wide nozzle. Big wick-hole. Vertical handle. Design on shoulders indecipherable; smoked wick-hole.

Cf. Broneer, No. 1454; DAC, Fig. 6640.

## 14. One-wick lamp



Grey clay. Length: 0.12 m, width: 0.068 m. Donation of Joseph Poller. Inv. No. MNK XI-A-74 (f. MNK IV-A-55). IV—Vc.A.D.

Elongated lamp with wide shoulders decorated alternatively with circles with inscribed rombs and squares filled with granules. On a slightly concave discus are represented two men en face. They are carrying a stick on the shoulders of which the bunch of grapes is hanging. Upon and under the grapes are two filling-holes. Long and wide nozzle with a big wick-hole. Vertical handle with a small hole. Good condition; a wick-hole partly smoked.

Cf. Garrucci, Pl. 475, 3; Delattre, Pl. VIII, 3; *DAO*, Fig. 6667; Broneer, No. 1471, Fig. 204; Menzel, No. 597, Abb. 77, 2.

The scene on the discus belongs to a repertory often shown in Early Christian Art, and is also found in artifacts of other categories (sarcophagi, glass, gems). It represents two emissaries of Moses to the land of Canaan (*Num.* 13, 24), and the grape symbolizes the Eucharist.

13. One-wick lamp