

INSCRIBED AND RADIATED-TYPE BYZANTINE LAMPS

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Certain lamps common in the Byzantine period (more specifically from the 4th to the 6th cent. A.D.) are according to their design on the nozzle usually referred to as "candlestick" lamps. The first of several problems connected with these lamps is their name, which is too restrictive and totally ignores other equally important designs used in the same family. In reviewing the various difficulties connected with the classification and dating of these lamps, which will be discussed in this article, the most reasonable name for such lamps appears to be that of "luchnaria" (singular, luchnarion), a shorter form of "luchnaria kala," meaning "pretty little lamps." This phrase is found as an inscription on actual lamps belonging to one of the groups discussed in this article. The name luchnarion was originally suggested for the entire family of lamps by Charles Clermont-Ganneau, but has never been generally adopted.¹

These lamps fall into two families. First there are those that carry an inscription around the filling hole (called hereinafter "Inscribed Type"), and second, those which instead of an inscription have lines radiating from the ring that surrounds the filling hole (called hereinafter "Radiated Type").

The following study is the result of two years of work with a few such lamps belonging to the Andrews University Archaeological Museum (AUAM) and one which is in the private collection of Lawrence T. Geraty. First a description of these lamps and of some lamp fragments will be presented. This presentation is followed by a discussion of the seven groups into which all inscribed lamps can be classified, and it will be ascertained into which of the seven groups the lamps in this study fall. Furthermore, an attempt is made to arrive at a proper sequence or dating of the inscribed lamps.

¹See Charles Clermont-Ganneau, *PEFQS*, 28 (1896), 259.

1. Lamp (AUAM 67.005) – The Inscribed Type (Fig. 1:1).

Provenance: Unknown.

Color: Reddish yellow, 5YR-6/6.²

Size: 10 x 6.5 cm.

Description: It is a molded lamp without a handle. Two rings are around the filling hole; the outside ring develops into a seven-branched palm-menorah on the nozzle, but its branches are not connected to the main stem, which forms a loop around the wick hole. Around the filling hole is a (corrupt) Greek inscription patterned after a common formula, ΦΩ ΧΥ ΦΕΝ ΠΑΑΣΙΝ “the light of Christ shines for all.” Some of the letters are poorly shaped, unnecessarily doubled, upside down, or out of sequence. The possible explanation for these irregularities and a possible pattern followed will be discussed later.

2. Geraty's lamp – The Inscribed Type (Fig. 1:2).

Provenance: Unknown.

Color: Pink, 7.5YR-7/4.

Size: 10.8 x 6.8 cm.

Description: It is a molded lamp without a handle. There are two rings around the filling hole; the outside ring breaks and extends along the nozzle of the lamp on each side of a seven-branched candlestick. Neither the branches of the candlestick nor the legs of the tripod touch the center stem, but the center stem connects with a single ring around the wick hole. Around the filling hole is a very clear Greek inscription, ΦΩΣ ΧΥ ΦΕΝΙ ΠΑΣΙΝ ΚΑΛΗ, “the light of Christ shines beautifully for all.” Extending around the inscription and on to the nozzle, but not to the end of it, is a raised line acting as a border enclosing the inscription and nozzle design.

3. Lamp Fragment (AUAM 68.293) (H68 331) – Inscribed (Fig. 1:3).

Provenance: Excavated at *Tell Hesbân*, Jordan, in 1968. It was found in Locus D.2:16, a hard-packed earth layer of Islamic times.

Color: Very pale brown, 10YR-8/4.

² The *Munsell Soil Color Charts* (1971 ed., of the Munsell Color Co., Inc., Baltimore, Md. 21218) have been used in order to avoid haphazard guesses in describing the color of pottery.

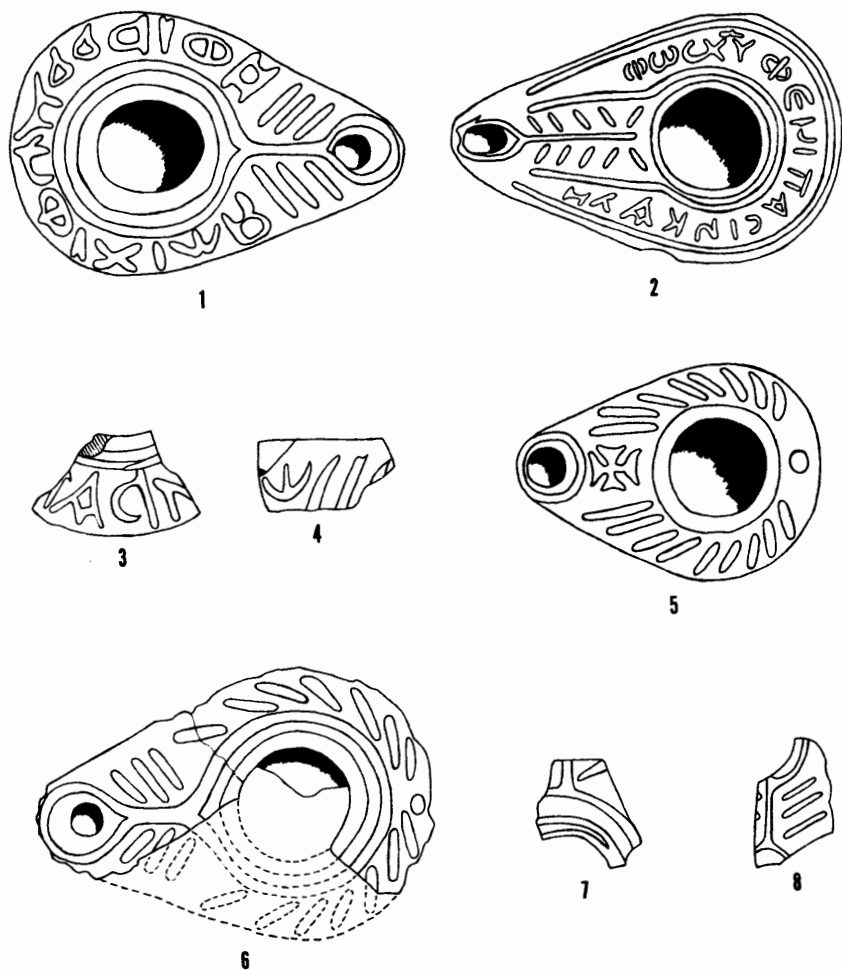


Fig. 1. Nos. 1 and 3-8 are Byzantine lamps and lamp fragments of the inscribed and radiated types in the Andrews University Archaeological Museum. No. 2 is an inscribed Byzantine lamp in the L. T. Geraty collection

