

Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: Ancient Lamps in the J. Paul Getty Museum
Book Author(s): Jean Bussi re and Birgitta Lindros Wohl
Published by: Getty Publications, J. Paul Getty Museum. (2017)
Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.6142263.6>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Getty Publications, J. Paul Getty Museum are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Ancient Lamps in the J. Paul Getty Museum*

Introduction

The Getty collection of well over six hundred ancient lamps began late in the history of the comparatively young museum. The lamps did not form part of Mr. Getty's personal interests, which focused mainly on paintings and sculpture, but belong (with one exception) rather to the policy of systematic broadening of the holdings after Mr. Getty's death in 1976. The earliest acquisitions of lamps in the form of gifts were in fact from that year, soon joined by others. Most gifts predate the purchased acquisitions, except for the Fleischman group of 1996. (See the Index of Donors and Vendors.) Apart from two single purchases (in 1973 and 2003), the majority of the Getty lamps came to the Museum in 1983, through the Galerie Günter Puhze in Freiburg, which facilitated the sale of a German private collection owned by Hans-Klaus Schüller. After some exchange of limited items, the final collection acquired contained 557 lamps of clay, bronze, and lead and one mold (cat. 458). Of these, twenty-six were registered as fakes; however, after careful examination, all but one, cat. 492, have been judged by the authors of the present catalogue to be genuine, and they have been included here with clear indications of their changed status (and possible remaining doubts).

Hans-Klaus Schüller maintained a long-standing interest in lamps and must be regarded as a fine connoisseur. In the 1970s he sold 410 lamps to Bochum University; those lamps are on permanent display in the Bochum Museum, awaiting publication by Dr. Heinrich Hermanns of Cologne University. In 1983 Mr. Schüller sold a second collection to the Getty Museum. The Bochum and the Getty collections exhibit striking similarities and homogeneity, even to the point of having fifty-one identical items. This is not surprising, for it is known that Mr. Schüller traveled and prospected in the same areas over long periods: principally Asia Minor, further in Tunisia, and less extensively in Egypt, Italy, and Greece. At the very beginning of his interest in lamps, he acquired some in Germany, where it is assumed they were excavated, possibly shortly after World War I.

Four vessels, which came to the Getty with the Erwin Oppenländer glass collection, were originally catalogued by the Museum as oil lamps. Recent research sheds doubt on that identification, and thus they are not included here. A pair of deep cups with flattened bases, made of translucent white glass with cobalt blue blobs, may be either beakers or lamps (inv. 2003.454 and 2003.455). Introduced in the late Roman period, hanging bowls and ovoid containers held in a *polycandelon*, or chandelier, served as lighting fixtures. Nearly rimless and with no trace of attachments for suspension, the function of the Getty vessels remains ambiguous. Two cylindrical containers (inv. 2003.378 and 2003.453) feature a small circular opening in a domed top and a strap handle. The absence of a nozzle or second opening for a wick argues against their function as lamps. Instead they are more probably *atramentaria*—inkwells, examples of which are found in ceramic, bronze, and glass.¹

The first objective of the present work is to provide a typological classification of the lamps, as far as possible presented in chronological order. The typological variety of the Getty Museum lamps is considerable, derived as they are from very diverse regions of the Mediterranean basin: twenty-four forms are without parallel in the wide literature consulted, and fifty-six forms have only an approximate closeness to known types. No existing typological classification alone can account for this diversity. Thus we have taken recourse in several typologies, widely accepted by lychnologists, such as those of Dressel,

Loeschcke, Broneer, Howland, Deneauve, Ennabli, Bailey, Bussière, and the fundamental Italian *Atlante delle forme ceramiche*.

Each lamp type in this catalogue is presented by an introduction summarizing its characteristics, listing its workshop signatures, proposing its chronology, and debating potential problems. Thanks to parallels found in the now-abundant specialized literature and to a variety of criteria, the Getty lamps have been divided into three major sections:

- I. Phoenico-Punic lamps
- II. Greek and Hellenistic lamps
- III. Roman-period lamps

Because of our recurrent ignorance of the exact place of manufacture or origin of the lamps—the place where they have been excavated and not just purchased—it has proved useful to subdivide section III, by far the largest one, into three further categories:

- A. Lamps from both the western and eastern provinces of the Roman Empire
- B. Lamps from North African provinces only
- C. Lamps from eastern provinces only

Categories B and C then concern lamps produced exclusively in one of the two geographical areas distinguished. They exhibit particular forms and decors, recognizable looks and clay color, and mostly signatures and workshop marks specific to those areas. In category A, on the other hand, it is not always easy to confirm whether a lamp—whose findspot is not known with certainty—derives from the western or the eastern part of the Mediterranean. Take, for instance, a given Getty lamp of type Loeschcke I or IV: was it fabricated in Italy and exported to Asia Minor, or was it made in Asia Minor from Italic models? Italic-type lamps from the end of the Roman Republic and the first century of the empire certainly were exported to the provinces. But the provincial regions rapidly produced lighting devices that imitated the Italic models, adding their own characteristics, when not emerging as downright original creations.

A series of minute observations have allowed us to distinguish, among the numerous lamps of Loeschcke type VIII, those items that were clearly produced in the east (group C) and cannot be considered Italic or African (group A). The following criteria apply to group C:

1. Globules on the shoulder, on each side of the handle or nozzle, either in relief or half sunken within a small circle
2. Small incised circles at the foot of the handle, at mid-shoulder, or on top of the nozzle
3. Pronounced depth of the basin
4. Bases of second- to sixth-century lamps have a plain *planta pedis*, often large and deeply impressed
5. Clay, glaze, or slip is often a vivid red orange or dark brown. Frequent presence of gold or silver mica particles in the clay

Most of the time information about place of manufacture or origin given by donors and vendors is vague, indicating the region or country where lamps have been purchased, for instance, Italy, Tunisia, or Anatolia. Only in a few cases is the place of manufacture or origin more precise by including a site, for instance, Paestum, Carthage, or El Djem.

Readers should therefore always remember that such places of manufacture or origin have little scientific validity. We record them exactly as they have been given by collectors and as they are listed in the Getty's online collection catalogue.

The second objective of this work is to describe each object, as faithfully as possible, according to a preestablished and consistent order: measurements, state of preservation, clay and surface treatment, handle, shape of basin, shoulder, details of nozzle and base, discus iconography, and the possible presence of a signature or a workshop mark.

Our description of the state of preservation has greatly benefited from helpful discussions and the professional expertise of members of the Getty Museum's Antiquities Conservation Department: Eduardo Sánchez and Susan Lansing Maish for the terracotta items, and Jeffrey Maish for the bronze lamps. In several cases, clever and frequent restorations, disguised with overpaint, can be assumed to derive from the collector. Some are obvious, others nearly invisible to the naked eye; the latter have been revealed by X-ray or ultraviolet techniques, and in some cases by simpler laboratory testing, for which we are very grateful. Twenty-six lamps had been registered as fakes, as mentioned above; all but one, however, we consider to be authentic. Analyses by the conservators confirmed our opinion in the majority of cases. We still have doubt about cat. 56; further technical analysis should be done for its authentication.

Munsell Color Charts have been used to describe the colors of the clay and glaze or slip, with some reservations. In spite of the limitations of a preset scheme—felt especially in the vitreous shades of green in the newer edition of Munsell—the charts afford a measure of objectivity if used under meticulously consistent lighting conditions. The distinct advantage of the Munsell charts over subjective verbal descriptions is obvious and has been remarked on in the literature. Nevertheless, complete precision will always remain elusive: thus, while the numeric chart variations cover most bases, the verbal descriptions in the charts often give limited options (which is why it is often necessary to have the Munsell book in hand). Furthermore, depending on position and exposure to different oven temperatures during firing, a lamp may take on different shades in different areas. In addition, as described above, a modern layer of paint camouflages numerous restorations to the Getty lamps. The only way to reach the clay layer for observation would be to strip the surface—not usually a procedure acceptable to museums. If we have not been able to observe the clay, it is so stated. Even without modern interference, many lamps exhibit a variety of shades of glaze or slip, which is so reported; this includes zones darkened either in the original firing or through later accidents.

Drawings of the discus decors have been considered unnecessary here, due to the excellent quality of the photographs, which in the online edition of this volume (<http://www.getty.edu/publications/ancientlamps>) can be enlarged at will. Following the examples of Bailey's BM II and Bussière's 2000 catalogues, we have limited ourselves to providing an alphanumeric repertory of the discus decors. The Getty Museum lamps present a particularly rich store of discus decors: forty-nine are totally new, while 105 are near variants on known themes, but without exact parallels. These conclusions are based on detailed research in nearly two thousand lamp publications. Parallels found for a specific decor are given in the catalogue entries. The bibliography lists about five hundred publications yielding comparanda.

The Index of Signatures and Inscriptions gives an alphabetical list of the texts and workshop signatures or marks. For closer study of the

presumed geographic locations of the workshops and their activity periods, we refer readers to Bailey BM II (chapter 3, pp. 89–121) and to Bailey BM III (chapter 3, pp. 95–147); for the repertory of North African workshop marks, readers should consult Bussière 2000 (pp. 215–37).

The illustrations for this work are exceptionally abundant in the online edition. Each lamp is shown in at least three color images—top, bottom, and profile—created by the remarkable professional competence of former Getty Museum photographer Ellen Rosenbery and current photographers Tahnee Cracchiola and Rebecca Truszkowski. Inscriptions and workshop marks are also reproduced, all in all creating a unique visual catalogue, which should make for easy and unusually rich access to the Getty Museum's collection of ancient lamps.

This work is the fruit of four years of collaboration by two scholars, both lychnologists, who bring together separate backgrounds and working experiences from different parts of the Mediterranean: North Africa and the Greek East.

Jean Bussière, based in Montpellier, France, has undertaken the typological classification, the catalogue entries, and the research of parallels; with the exceptions of the sections mentioned below by Birgitta Wohl, he is responsible for the chronologies, the introductions to the types, the decorative repertory, and the index of Roman inscriptions.

Birgitta Lindros Wohl, who lives in Los Angeles, has been the liaison with the Museum. She organized and supervised the preliminary photos taken by Kelly Ramage, without which this transatlantic enterprise would not have been possible. She is responsible for the measurements of all the lamps as well as their color identifications with the Munsell Color Charts; the introductions, entries, and comparanda to the lamps of Broneer type XXVII and XXVIII; the Late Palestinian circular lamps, section 47; the metal lamps, section IV, with their bibliography; and the index of Greek inscriptions. She has also undertaken the definitive fashioning of the text in English.

Apart from these divisions, a number of issues of organization, presentation, and interpretation were solved by common discussions over a period of time. We hope the result offers the practical and useful tool we envisioned.

The authors completed their work on this catalogue in November 2012. However, because of the lengthy photography campaign needed for the many lamps, the publication of the catalogue had to be postponed for several years. Due to other commitments each author had, it has not been possible to update the general bibliographic references beyond 2012; the bibliography for individual lamps has been updated through 2016.

NOTES

1. Some Byzantine clay lamps, which due to their shape are often called "ink pot lamps," are featured in, e.g., Broneer 1930, although he does not use that name. While similar to inkwells (*atramentaria*), these lamps all have air holes and at times a spout at the edge for the wick—items lacking on the Getty objects. See, e.g., Broneer 1930, p. 292, no. 1522, fig. 207, or p. 292, no. 1543, pl. XXIV. See also Motsianos et al. 2011, p. 155, no. 32; Wight 2011, pp. 122–23, figs. 92–93.

For further discussion, see Whitehouse 1988 and Lightfoot 2013; we are grateful to Claire Lyons for sharing this information.