

Abdelmajid Ennabli, *Lampes Chrétiennes de Tunisie*. Musées du Bardo et de Carthage. Etudes d'Antiquités Africaines. Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris 1976. 255 pages, 69 plates.

Among the great centres of lamp production in the ancient world North Africa has especially attracted the interest of scholars and collectors since the late nineteenth century. The extensive international campaign of archaeological salvage at Carthage has in recent years again focused attention on the splendid lamps produced in that area in the Roman period and thus E.'s volume has appeared at an opportune moment. Earlier lamps from Carthage had been published some years ago by J. Deneauve (see my review in *Am. Journal Arch.* 77, 1973, 109 f.) but here we find gathered together much of the later material. Most of it, especially that from the Bardo and Carthage Museums, had indeed been published earlier in catalogues or in a series of books and articles by P. Delattre but little had been adequately illustrated or described. Dr. Ennabli's book has filled this need in good part with its presentation of 1266 lamps of which over 530 are illustrated with generally adequate photographs of their top sides; unfortunately there are no profile drawings and no illustrations of the various designs, letters, etc. found on the underside within the base ring. The author, however, has sorted out the rich iconographic vocabulary of decorative motifs used on the curving rim panels that flank the keyhole-shaped disk and nozzle areas and has provided line drawings of the various forms that 23 of them take.

The first 34 pages of the book introduce the type, provide a history of the collections represented, discuss chronology, decor and iconography, and provide some selective summaries of similar bodies of material from a variety of other collections. Several pages follow that sum up the brief bibliography of works published on the collections, especially the poorly illustrated 'Catalogue du Musée Alaoui' and the extensive but also inadequately illustrated lists published from 1890 on by Delattre in *Revue de l'Art Chrétien*.

As with most museum collections the material presented here represents only a selection of the best preserved and most interesting pieces; it is no accident that only two lamps with an undecorated disk are noted. Nevertheless the large range of lamps illustrated, many in multiple copies, probably gives a fairly good idea of the range of production. It is unfortunate that so few have any proper archaeological provenance although E. has attempted to establish it wherever possible.

The introduction opens with a useful description of the basic form and fabric of the type. Some more discussion of the moulds might have been included and a figure referred to on p. 13 of the different variants seems to have inadvertently been left out although the various forms – double-nozzled, funnel-handled, equipped with reflector plate, etc. – can be seen among the plates with little difficulty.

Eight pages sum up our knowledge of the origins of the collections: a vast range of public and private excavations since 1885 in the ruins of Carthage; a few from a Roman bath reused as a lampmaker's workshop at Oudna; an unspecified number from El Djem, which seems to have been a major centre of production for a particularly fine type (none of these is listed separately, however, and must thus be searched out here and there in the catalogue). Another major collection included is that of the Pères Blancs in the museum at Carthage itself. There over many years Père Delattre built up an extensive collection from his excavations all over the ancient city; E. collects all the references to Delattre's publications over the years and summarizes his work. The museum's collections were substantially increased in 1954 with the donation of a private collection of 234 lamps by the estate of a noted local collector, Dr. Carton, which had been created between 1886 and 1924.

The third section on chronology appeared too soon to take advantage of recent careful stratigraphic analysis in many of the areas now undergoing excavation at Carthage (e. g. J. Humphrey et al., *Excavations at Carthage*, 1976) and rightly despairs of the lack of precision in earlier work. It is a pity that E. seems to accept the impossibly early date (pre-A.D. 378) given by the excavator to the contexts at Sétif that produced lamps of this sort. Better archaeological evidence is available from the wreck at Port-Miou, recently redated by Hayes (*Supplement to Late Roman Pottery*, p. 482, note 10) to ca. 410–425 A. D. where only versions earlier than the classic type dealt with in E.'s book were found. It would also have been desirable if he had illustrated more closely and described in detail the two lamps (952, 1045) with impressions of coins of Theodosius II on their rims as they serve as the only terminus post quem that we have for the type. For another example from France see Gallia, Suppl. 3, p. 174 and for a discussion of the coin type (which is placed ca. 422/423 A. D. and thus not as late as the A. D. 439 mentioned in E.'s text) see J. P. C. Kent, *Auream Monetam . . . Cum Signo Crucis*. *Num. Chron.* 20, 1961, 129 ff.



Short sections on decor and iconography follow. E. points out the basic problem of whether to invest every representation with Christian significance (Delattre's position) or whether sometimes at least to regard them as merely decorative. E. strikes a sensible middle course as indeed lampmakers throughout the Empire often merely borrowed from other media around them with no thought for their context. I would suggest, however, that the miniature scenes from Old and New Testament owe a great deal to contemporary manuscript illustration and it does seem they have been neglected as a potentially valuable source of information by students of early Christian art.

The introduction concludes with a discussion of other catalogued collections. None of these has any pretensions of being complete and it is clear how necessary a detailed study of the North African lamp and its imitations would be. That Alexandria is still suggested as its place of origin and manufacture in recent museum catalogues (e. g. T. Szentlekey, *Ancient Lamps* [1969] 127) indicates the problem: certainly large numbers have been found there and may even have been produced locally but the overwhelming quantities from Tunisia should leave no doubt about its actual place of origin. E. might have included O. Broneer's discussion of the type in his volume on the Corinth lamps and it is very odd not to find J. Hayes' work mentioned. Local import and imitation was widespread in Italy and Greece and to a lesser degree in Gaul and Spain, contrasting markedly with the rarity of the type in published and unpublished collections in the Middle East. Even in Asia Minor there are few (for example I only know of two unpublished fragments from Anemurium for the whole south coast of Turkey). Their absence is in marked contrast to the rich finds of African Red Slip wares of the same period in these areas.

Following the introduction is a convenient bibliography of lamps in the Bardo, at Carthage and elsewhere in Tunisia and Algeria. One might add L. Carton, *Les fabriques de lampes dans l'ancienne Afrique*. Bull. trim. de la Soc. de Géogr. et d'Arch. d'Oran, 1916, 61–103.

The catalogue that follows is broken down into categories by disk decoration: mythological with thirteen examples of Achilles, a popular figure in early Christian metalwork, dragging the corpse of Hector behind his chariot (such scenes are extremely rare but for a Leda and the swan on a North African lamp see E. LeBlant, *De quelques sujets représentés sur des lampes en terre cuite*. Mém. École Franç. Rome 6, 1886, 229 ff); biblical scenes including the sacrifice of Isaac (one of the most popular types copied in Greece), various versions of Nebuchadnezzar and the three Hebrew youths (apparently the most popular story; one wonders if it might be connected with the Persian war of the 420's), the Messengers with the grapes of Canaan, and Jonah and the whale. Rarer are New Testament subjects like Christ triumphant over serpent, basilisk, etc. (an image in any event borrowed from imperial iconography of the fourth century), evangelists, angels and what may be a reference to the story of St. Peter and the cock (631: a cock on a column). There follows an unusual group of unidentified scenes – mostly persons up in tree houses playing pipes! – and then a long series of 'personnages' (92–259), some of whom seem to have been borrowed from male and female imperial portraits on coins (92; 107; 111). E. makes no reference to the possible identity of these persons nor to the discussion going back to Delbrueck's *Spätantike Kaiserporträts* (1933) 167 f. on whether the lady on 111 is Fausta, wife of Constantine, or not (most recently see A. M. Ramieri, *Gruppo di lucerne tardo antiche da S. Prisca*. Riv. Arch. Christ. 54, 1978, 306 ff.). It does not seem to have been noticed that similar female heads appear in roundels on bronze relief panels from the late fourth century (cf. those illustrated in the Metropolitan Museum's catalogue to its recent exhibition 'The Age of Spirituality'). The style of relief varies enormously in these representations from the well-modelled (e. g. 118) to the perfunctory and linear (119). Swordsmen, spearmen, erotes with torches, naked ladies in high boots, bestiarii are but some of the subjects found here.

Animals form the second largest group (260–495), followed by birds (496–673) and fish (674–761). Lions, panthers, boars, deer, goats, rabbits, sheep, camels, horses and dogs all have their place and the feathered world is equally widely represented with phoenix, dove, peacock, pelican, rooster, swan (the finely modelled bird on 663 is unusual in the plasticity of its relief compared to its brethren that are mostly composed of lines and dots and one wonders if it might have been taken from an earlier source). Plants (762–802) are mostly palms and pine or cedar followed by a large selection (803–857) of chalices, some with vines growing from them. The largest group (858–1168) is made up of Christian signs: chi-rho monograms and cross monograms (with the tail of the rho either right or left), crosses of different shape and decoration (some perhaps modelled on the great jewelled crosses of the day), and even crosses set up in arched shrines. Finally there is a variety of decorative patterns ('fleurons', 1169–1264) although I suspect that some of the elaborately jewelled rectangles (e. g. 1179) may represent richly bound codices, perhaps even Bibles. One last oddity is 1256 which seems to be a head set in a small shrine; one thinks of a martyrrium.



The book itself is attractive and well produced; misprints are few although somehow the photographs for 202 and 203 were transposed. Dr. Ennabli and the CNRS are to be congratulated for having produced a useful catalogue of one of the great lamp collections of the early Christian world.

Athens

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