

Bronze Lamps and *Polycandela* : the Averof collection in the Baron Tositsas foundation museum*

— Metsovo, Epirus, NW Greece —
(pl. 120 à 123)

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Metsovo is a small mountainous town in the district of Epirus, some 450 km northwest of Athens. The town houses the museum of the Baron M. Tositsas Foundation where visitors can appreciate, among other exhibits, an important group of bronze lighting devices.

The devices formed part of the collection of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine objects of Ev. Averof, a distinguished Greek politician with an important political and literary activity¹. The Evangelos Averof collection includes –among other items²– 23 metallurgy products covering a wide period ranging from Roman to Late Byzantine times. They are exquisite works of artistic sensitivity representing a wide range of art forms. The group includes lamps, lamp stands, *candelai* and *polycandela*, all of considerable importance because of their manufacture, decoration or typological rarity. The collection reflects the interests and the activities of the collector Ev. Averof.

The following presentation of lamps and *polycandela* is based on their typological similarities and relative chronology, following the established thematic relevant bibliography. Since their exact provenance is unknown, an effort will also be made to establish the origin of each object. The Averof collection includes 12 lamps³ characterized by the variety of their handle decoration.

1. Lamp, 1st-2nd century AD

Length : 0,19 m, Width : 0,08 m, Height : 0,12 m.

It is a pear-shaped lamp with a single nozzle, a ring base and an elongated spout with a petal-shaped opening (Fig.1). Its handle consists of a very thin stem, highly raised and curving above the body. The stem ends in a horse's head carved in the round protruding from a flower bud (Fig. 2).

This lamp, with the naturalistic treatment of the horse head, is of exquisite craftsmanship and is dated to the Roman period⁴.

This specific type is known from as early as the Hellenistic period. Pear-shaped lamps with handles terminating into animal heads (horse, lion, bird etc) are quite known and can be found in the British Museum collection⁵ as well as in the Museo Nazionale Romano⁶. Many clay lamps of the same period copy this type, as illustrated by this example in the Schlossinger collection⁷.

Bibliography:

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 73, Fig. 134.

2. Lamp

Length : 0,165 m, Width : 0,04 m, Height : 0,085 m.

To the same period probably belongs another lamp in the shape of a dolphin (Fig. 3). The mammal's tail serves as the lamp handle. The filling-hole is covered with a disc-shaped lid topped by another, smaller, fish with curved body. The gills and eyes of the fish are indicated in relief on each side. The type goes back to the Hellenistic period.

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1- During his long political career, Ev. Averof (1908-1900) had been minister of Agriculture, of Foreign Affairs, of National Defence and other. His contribution as a novel, narration and theatre plays writer has also been very important. In addition, there is a Modern Greek painting gallery at Metsovo, which constitutes a donation of Ev. Averof.

2- The collection includes coins of the Ancient and the Byzantine period, pottery of the 5th-3rd c. B.C., minor art objects that are dated from the Iron Age to the first century A.D., portable icons of important Postyztantine painters, old books, 18th–19th c. weapons etc. For more elements for the Averof Collection, see Συλλογές Ευ. Αβέρωφ, Athens 2000.

3- In this article we refer to the most characteristic items.

4- For a similar lamp, see *Lumière* 2003, no. 109, p. 91.

5- Walters 1914, pl.VI, no. 85, pl.VII, no. 84, no. 92 and no. 66, pl. IV, but with a different body.

6- Spagnolis, Carolis 1983, 45-46, pl. V, 1, and see the bibliography there given.

Similar lamps are to be found in the Museo Nazionale Romano⁸.

Bibliography:

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 80, Fig. 143.

3. Lamp, 6th-7th century

Length : 0,21 m, Width : 0,07 m, Height : 0,14 m.

Single-nozzle lamp with the handle decorated with the head of a horse (Fig. 4). The lamp has a cylindrical base, an ovate body and an elongated spout bearing a flattened wick-hole. The filling-hole has a small conical lid. The handle is semi-circular and arched above the body. It is decorated with the neck and head of a horse carved in the round with characteristic details (Fig. 5). The decoration on the horse's mane is of particular interest.

For an almost similar handle see a lamp in the Museum of Cairo⁹.

Horse representations on lamps are, according to one view, indicative of the owner's interest and love for horses and hippodrome races which were very popular during Roman and Early Christian times¹⁰.

This lamp type is very characteristic and derives most probably from a very well known lamp type with the handle ending in a griffin head; this theme comes in several versions. Bronze lamps with plastic decoration on the handle are to be found in many museums and private collections around the world such as the Dumbarton Oaks collection¹¹. In Athens they can be found in the Stathatos collection, the Benaki Museum and the Kanellopoulos Museum¹².

Their majority come from the Eastern Mediterranean, namely Egypt, Syria and Palestine.

Bibliography :

Byzantine Art 1964, αρ. 535, δ. 406.

Splendeur de Byzance 1982, Br. 8, p. 165.

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 74, Fig. 136.

4. Lamp, 6th century

Length : 0,18 m, Width : 0,06 m, Height : 0,11 m.

Lamp with handle decorated with branches revolving around small cross. It is made of two separately cast parts, the body and the handle; the latter bears ample plastic decoration (Fig. 6). The lamp has an ovate body, an elongated spout with a flattened wick-hole. It also has cylindrical, slightly outward leaning base. Its handle made by one curved rod that ends in two interweaving shoots with heart-shaped decoration on their joints, topped by a cross.

Bibliography:

Papadopoulou 2000, p.76, Fig. 138.

5. Lamp, 6th century

Length : 0,18 m, Width : 0,07 m, Height : 0,11 m.

Single-nozzle lamp with handle decorated with branches around small cross (Fig.7). Is similar to no. 4 with same unessential differences at the handle. The oil hole has a disc-shape cover.

This type of lamps is also well known since the Roman period and is still manufactured in early Christian times, albeit adjusted to the demands of the Christian religion with new christian symbols. Similar lamps¹³ are to be found in many museums and collections around the world. This type was widely employed, with small variations, during the 5th-7th century. We mention here two similar lamps in the Dumbarton Oaks collection¹⁴ and the Benaki Museum in Athens¹⁵ as well as a third one with a similar handle in the New York Metropolitan Museum¹⁶ and others in a private collection in Bavaria¹⁷ and in a private collection in Athens¹⁸.

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 78, Fig. 139.

6. Lamp, 6th century

Length : 0,13 m, Width : 0,06 m, Height : 0,09 m.

Single nozzle lamp, with ovate body and an elongated spout, all supported by a ring-shaped base (Fig.8). The filling-hole is demarcated by an upright lip and bears a disc-shaped lid. The handle lamp is in the shape of a cross whose tines end in pairs of small discs.

7- *Qedem* 1978, no. 370-372, 90-91.

8- Spagnolis, Carolis 1983, p. 84, pl. XXIV,7.

9- Strzygowski 1904, no. 9144, p. 293, pl. XXXIII.

10- Chalkia 1999, 447-460.

11- Ross 1962, no. 30, p. 31, pl. XXV with relative bibliography.

12- *Καθημερινή Ζωή* 2003, p. 294, no. 311.

13- *Λύχνες*.

14- Ross 1962, no. 38, 36-37, pl. XXVIII.

15- *Splendeur de Byzance* 1982, Br. 6, p. 163.

16- *Age of Spirituality* 1979, 620-21, no. 556.

17- *Rom und Byzanz* 1998, 86-87, no. 78.

18- *Καθημερινή Ζωή* 2002, p. 290, no. 306.

This type of lamps comes in several variations like the one portrayed by an item in the Princeton University¹⁹ and the Brooklyn Museum collections²⁰. The majority of bronze lamps of this type seem to have derived from Egypt, although it is probable that the type was widely produced in numerous districts of the Eastern Mediterranean during early Christian times. Based on similarities with a lamp in the Mainz Museum²¹ we suggest that the lamp under discussion can be attributed to the 6th century.

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 76, Fig. 137.

7. Lamp, 6th century

Length : 0,16 m, Width : 0,07 m, Height : 0,10 m.

Another interesting lamp is a single-nozzle lamp with a flat upper surface and an elongated spout (Fig. 9). Between the body and the wick-hole two crescent-shaped finials are formed. A lid that extends over part of the spout, bearing a carved bull's head covers the filling-hole. The handle is lyre-shaped and based on a shaft that ends in a ring.

This object can be compared to two other lamps one in the Dumbarton Oaks collection²² and the other in the Kanellopoulos Museum in Athens²³. Lamps of this type, with a flat upper body surface, lateral crescent-shaped endings and lids decorated with animal heads are quite common and known to come from Egypt and Asia Minor²⁴. They can be found in the British Museum²⁵, the Athens Byzantine Museum²⁶ and the M. Latsis collection²⁷ also in Athens.

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 79, Fig. 141.

8. Lamp, 6th century

Length : 0,20 m, Width : 0,09 m, Height : 0,15 m.

The lamp has a flat upper body surface and two crescent-shaped elements between the body and the wick-hole (Fig.10). The handle has the form of a large heart-shaped punched curving leaf whose back stands on an oblique shaft ending in a ring. Palm trees with spreading branches in a parallel setting are depicted on the leaf. This lamp is similar to one from the Dumbarton Oaks collection²⁸, with

the only difference that the latter has two nozzles and dates to the 6th century (being probably a product of a Syrian workshop). The palm tree with the seven spreading branches was a favorite subject in the decoration of clay lamps mostly²⁹.

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 80, Fig. 142.

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Lamps were a cheap means of lighting, depending on the material they were made of; this is why they are not often mentioned in written sources.

The most common fuel was olive oil, although “λευκόν νάφθαν ή γήθεν έλαιον”. The latter was known to the inhabitants of the eastern borders ανατολικά σύνορα οικούντες according to Efstathios, bishop of Thessaloniki³⁰. In some cases, though, other fuel types were employed, too, such as animal fats. The lamps usually had a cotton wick – “απτότρουβον ή απτρότουβον εκ βάμβακος”. Lamps were usually portable or attached to lamp-stands, in which case they were called “λυχνία σταταρέα ή κοντολύχνια”. The Averof collection includes two such lamp-stands.

Lampstand, last 6th – early 7th century

Height : 0,31 m, Base Diam. 0,12 m.

The bronze lampstand is baluster-shaped with turned decorations on the shaft. The base resembles an inverted bell-flower and rests on three projecting feet in the shape of horse hooves (Fig. 12). The base, the shaft and the upper section were separately cast.

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 85, Fig. 147.

Lampstand, last 6th – early 7th century

Height : 0,31 m, Base Diam. : 0,12 m.

This bronze lampstand (Fig. 11) has a tripod base and shaft that consists of a large latin cross held between two short cylindrical sections. The shaft ends in a small disc (saucer). The lampstand is quite similar to two other items

19- *Byzantium at Princeton* 1986, no. 58, p. 77.

20- Freidman 1989, no. 81, p. 171.

21- Meizel 1969, p. 111, pl. 92,4.

22- Ross 1962, no. 37, p. 36, pl. XXVIII.

23- Μπρούσκαρη 1985, no. 612, p. 142.

24- For lamps of this type, with small variations within each other, see Wulff 1909, nos.782, 783, 785, 174-75.

25- Bailey 1996, p. 69, no. Q3796, pl. 80.

26- Βυζαντινό Μουσείο 1997, no. 114, p. 196.

27- Καθημερινή Ζωή 2003, p. 288, pl. 304, 305.

28- Ross 1962, no. 35, p. 35, pl. XXVI.

29- Chrzanovski, Zhuravlev 1998, no. 97, p. 159.

30- Κουκουλής 1948, B, 91-94, where are the relative to the subject sources.

in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts³⁰ and the Brooklyn Museum³¹. At the same category belong two other lamp-stands, although they are more decorated, in the Museum of Berlin³² and that of Cairo³³.

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 84, Fig. 146.

Polycandela

House-lighting in Byzantium served as a social marker. The financially weaker classes used clay lamps; those who could not even afford the fuel were called “άλυχνοι” (“lamp-less”) a term reserved for those in dismal financial condition. On the other hand, the rich used lamps made on more valuable materials such as bronze, silver or even gold³⁴.

Lighting of palaces, churches and major mansions was achieved mostly through *polycandela* (made of bronze, silver or gold). *Polycandela* form another category of lighting devices in Byzantine times and are represented in the Averof collection by six examples.

1. *Polycandelon*, 5th - 6th centuries

Height : 0,165 m (without the chains), Base Diam. 0,26 m.

The *polycandelon* could be dated between the 5th and the 6th centuries. It has a cylindrical body, fifteen articulated protruding parts and three suspension chains (Fig. 13). The cylindrical body ends on both upper and lower surfaces in a beaked lip delineated by a thin ridge and narrow incised parallel lines. A punched consecratory inscription on the wide band thus formed in Greek reveals the name of the donor: “ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ (ΔΩ) ΡΟΥ ΚΟΝΩΝ Ε(Υ)ΤΡΑΤΙΟΥ”.

The upper part of the staff presents sixteen articulated parts with schematic fish shapes bearing a ring at each tail end, designed to support each glass oil-lamp. The device presents numerous similarities to two *polycandela* from Giza in Egypt dated to the same period and exhibited in the Berlin Museum³⁵. Another similar contemporary find, albeit with a pierced inscription, is to be found in the Louver Museum³⁶.

Polycandela of this type were used to light large urban and ecclesiastical buildings³⁷. Ecclesiastical leaders and

providers donated many of the lighting devices used in churches. The *polycandela* under discussion could be such donations.

The fish decoration present on the joint parts is related to the dolphin and is often encountered on lighting devices, individual lamps and combination *polycandela* alike. The most impressive *polycandela* of this type are among the equipment offered by the emperor Konstantinos to the *basilica* of Laterano. The “*Liber Pontificalis*” mentions that these crowns of light, “*corona lucis*”, could bear fifty, eighty or even as many as one hundred- twenty lamps called “dolphins”.

Bibliography :

Greece and the Sea 1987, no. 150

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 86, Fig. 148.

2. *Polycandelon*, 6th century

Base Diam. 0,20 m.

Similar to the following. The suspension are not preserved (Fig.14).

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 88, Fig. 150.

3. *Polycandelon*, 6th century

Height : 0,38 m (with the chains), Base Diam. 0,20 m.

The *polycandelon* has a pierced cast disc with a Maltese cross in the center (Fig. 15). The cross-shaped core is surrounded by six small crosses alternating with six circular openings for holding small vessels or other material which would have been filled with oil and furnished with a wick. Three loops for suspension. A similar find comes from the Corinth excavations³⁸. Similar objects with varying decorations come from the entire Byzantine world and formed the main lighting device for large urban and ecclesiastical buildings. In general, for this particular type of *polycandela*, see note 39³⁹. According to a description by P. Silentarios (PG 86,2,2150) similar silver *polycandela* were used to light the temple of Hagia Sofia in Constantinople.

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Papadopoulou 2000, p. 88, Fig. 149.

30- Gonosova, Kondoleon 1994, no. 89, p. 260.

31- Freidman 1989, no. 81, p. 171.

32- Wulff 1909, no. 994, p. 209, pl. XLVIII.

33- Strzygowski 1904, no. 9126, p. 287, pl. 319.

34- Κουκουλέζ 1948, B, p. 93.

35- Wulff 1909, nos. 1002 and 1003.

36- *Byzance* 1992, no. 68, p. 121 and Καθημερινή Ζωή 2002, p. 283, Fig. 296.

37- Oxford Dictionary 1991, see “Lighting ecclesiastical”, p. 1227.

38- Corinth 1952, no. 859, p. 128, pl. 63.

39- *Byzantium* 1988, nos. 4, 5.

4. *Polycandelon, middle-byzantine period*

Height : 0,33 m, Base Diam. 0,23 m.

Disc-shaped bronze *polycandelon*, dated to the middle Byzantine period (Fig. 16). The openwork disk has been pierced with geometric and flower patterns. Six circular sockets for the glass-lamps amongst the designs. The disk was suspended by three flat metal straps and a trilobite flower bud ending in an s-shaped hook.

This *polycandelon* is similar to one from Proussa exhibited in the Istanbul Museum (inv. number 7722) bearing the name of *protospatharios* Marianos and dating to the middle Byzantine period⁴⁰. Based on this evidence the Averof collection *polycandelon*, originally attributed to the 6th century, can be dated to the same period. The decorative pattern and the stylistic similarities allow us to assign it to an Constantinople workshop.

Bibliography :

Byzantine Art 1964, no. 546, p. 409.

Splendeur de Byzance 1982, Br. 20, p. 177.

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 89, Fig. 151.

5. *Polycandelon, 11th – 12th century*

Height : 0,58 m, Base Diam. 0,33 m.

Equally interesting is another disc-shaped *polycandelon* dated between the 11th and the 12th century. The disk is decorated with geometric and floral patterns alternating with nine circular openings (Fig. 17). The nine holes and presumably the central one as well, would each hold a glass oil-lamp. The *polycandelon* is suspended by three chains made of triple wide vertical elements formed by small perpendicular crosses jointed at the sides with opposed stylized *fleur-de-lis* motifs (Fig. 19). Between the two vertical elements lies a medallion on which is depicted an imaginary animal (Fig. 18).

This *polycandelon* illustrated here is a remarkably fine example of its kind. The detail on the metalwork is exceptionally refined. It is a valuable work of Byzantine metalurgy portraying the technical skills of the craftsmen and the variety of the inventory of the Byzantine artists.

Bibliography :

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 90, Fig. 153.

6. *Polycandelon, probably 9th – 10th century*

Height : 0,52 m, Width : 0,22 m.

The *polycandelon* consists of four vertical curved parts ending in bent leaves (Fig. 20). The vertical parts join in a cross creating thus a central *anthemium*. Four horizontal rings with similar decoration stem out from the vertical parts; these served to support glass oil-lamps. At the upper part of the *polycandelon* the vertical parts create a floral pattern topped by a ring with a long suspension chain. The chain is made of four small turned parts jointed with fastenings.

Although unique in type this object can be dated, according to decorative and manufacture details, probably to the 9th-10th century.

Bibliography:

Papadopoulou 2000, p. 90, Fig. 152.

Candelai

The Averof collection also includes two bronze *candelai* dated to the 11th century and probably coming from Constantinople (Fig. 21,22). This type with its conical body can be identified with the “*κονίσκιον*” of the Byzantine texts⁴¹. The *candelai* are identical with slight differences at the decoration. They consist of a cylindrical body with three chains jointed on their upper end with a turned element in the shape of a flower bud. The interior of the body held the glass oil-lamp. The body is decorated by two bands of openwork floral pattern, quite similar to that of a bronze vessel from Dil-Iskelesi in Asia Minor, now exhibited in the Saatlliche Museen in Berlin⁴². They also present similarities with the decoration of a *candela* of a private collection⁴³.

This comparison dates the Averof collection *candelai* to the 11th century instead of the 6th to 5th as was originally suggested. The surface of the objects is covered by a thin layer of tin. This technique was known in Byzantium and is mentioned by several Byzantine authors, like the emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogenetos⁴⁴, and Efstathios bishop of Thessaloniki⁴⁵.

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Papadopoulou 2000, 94-95, Fig. 154,155.

40- Firathi 1969, p. 198, pl. 18.

41- Bouras 1981, 479-486.

42- Wulff 1911, no. 1986, p. 93, pl. XVI.

43- Mango 1994, p. 221, pl. 117,6.

44- *De Cerimoniis*, p. 676.

45- Παρεκβολαί, 133, 25.

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

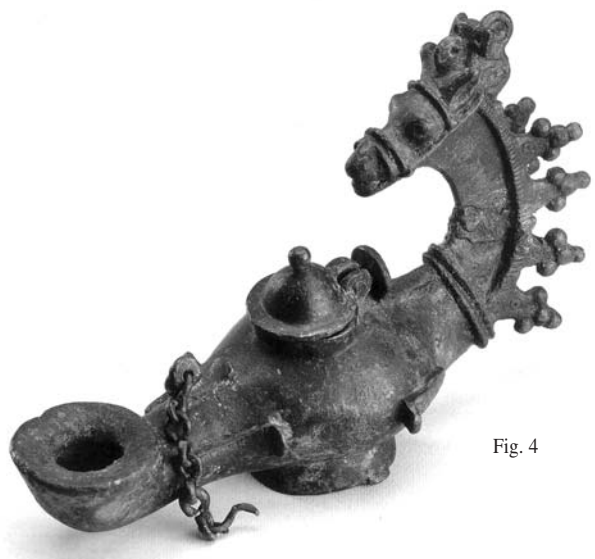


Fig. 4

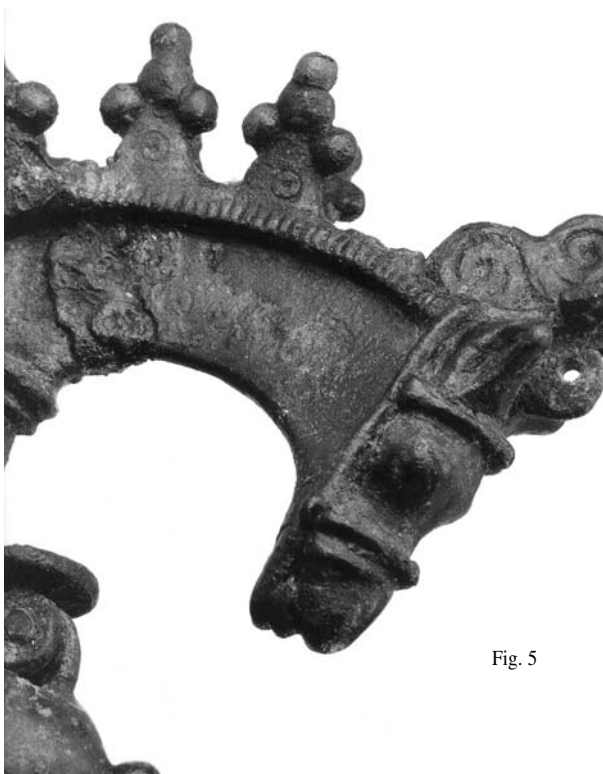


Fig. 5

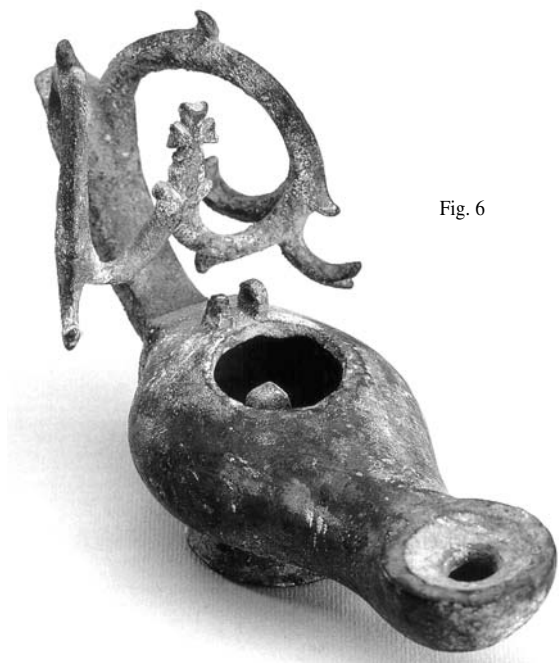


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

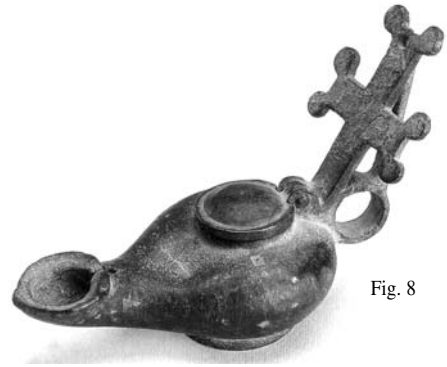


Fig. 8

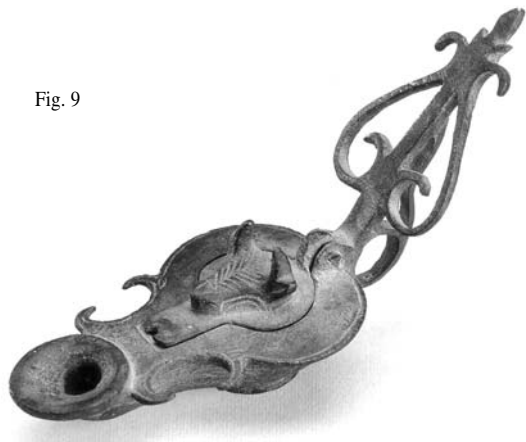


Fig. 9

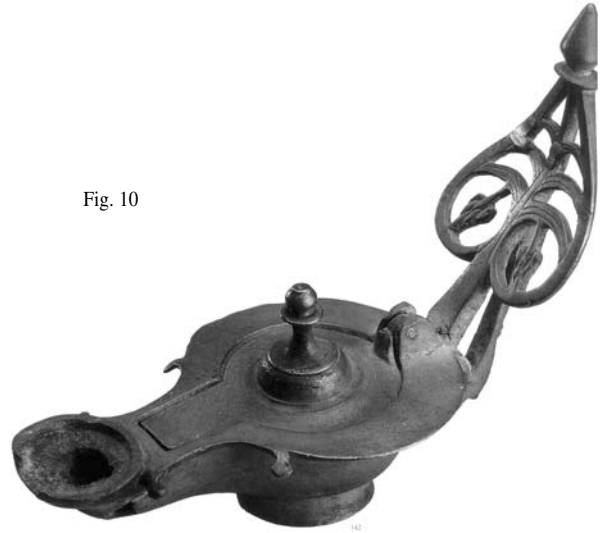


Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

Fig.14

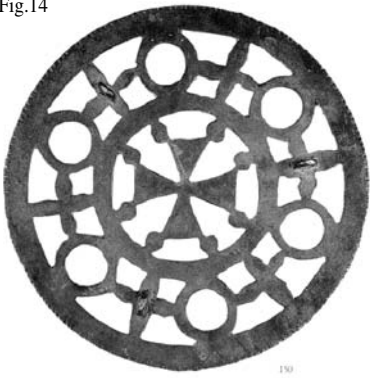


Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

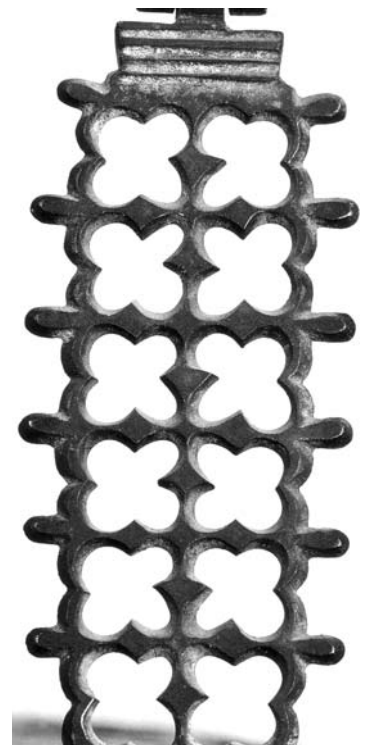




Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

Jean-Louis Podvin
Lampes d'Anubis seul



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Fig. 5



Fig. 1- Anubis à la chlamyde (© Musée monographique de Conimbriga).
 Fig. 2- Anubis à la tunique (d'après Bussière 92 ; Musée de Tipasa).
 Fig. 3- Anubis (?) à la chlamyde et corne d'abondance (d'après Merlin, Poinssot 755 ; Musée du Bardo).
 Fig. 4- Anubis (?) à la tunique, tourné à droite (d'après Heres 315 ; Musée de Berlin).
 Fig. 5- Tête d'Anubis (?) (d'après Bussière 115 ; Musée de Constantine).