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THE 'EPHESIAN' TERRACOTTA
OIL LAMPS FROM THE AGORA
OF NEA PAPHOS

Abstract: *Ephesian terracotta oil lamps are a group of Hellenistic lamps used during the last two centuries BC and probably also in the 1st century AD. This very interesting mould-made type has very characteristic form, clay and ornamentation. Widespread across the whole Mediterranean, they were present in Cyprus and examples were discovered during the Paphos Agora Project. From certain findings it is even possible to suggest that Nea Paphos was a place where they were produced.*

Keywords: *Cyprus; oil lamps; Hellenistic period; Nea Paphos; Ephesus*

Over the three seasons of excavations conducted in the area of the Agora in the ancient capital of Cyprus – Nea Paphos – three trenches were opened.¹ They contained interesting architectural structures such as *tabernae* along a portico and some water-supply installations (including a pipeline, a well and a cistern). Amongst the varying archaeological material (pottery, metal, glass) dating from the Classical until the late Roman period, 17 whole and 302 fragments of separate terracotta oil lamps were found. Of these, 10 of the fragments (including one almost entire lamp, see below) could be interpreted as Ephesian oil lamps. Three of them are fragments of grooved handles and a few are the small parts of lamp bodies. The pictures below

¹ The excavations of the mission conducted by E. Papuci-Władyka under the license granted by the Director of the Department of Cypriot Antiquities; the project is granted by Narodowe Centrum Nauki (National Science Centre, Poland), grant OPUS NCN 2011/01/B/HS3/01282; for more information see www.paphos-agera.archeo.uj.edu.pl.

(Pl. 1: 2-3) show two examples of Ephesian lamps found during the Paphos Agora Project in late Hellenistic and early Roman contexts. Unfortunately, they both came from intermixed layers.

The first fragment (cat. no. 1; Pl. 1: 2) is a rhombic nozzle decorated with convex globules arranged in one row in the middle of the flat top.

The second (cat. no. 2; Pl. 1: 3) is almost wholly preserved but lacks a nozzle, which probably would have resembled the fragment described above. It is decorated with a similar motive, placed in three rows on the shoulders. The characteristic double-convex shape and sharp edges probably imitate more expensive metal objects. In addition, the vertical handle in the form of a grooved ring resembles bronze (Howland 1958, 167). Around the relatively small filling hole, three additional oil-holes can be found. The rhombic or circular nozzle is flattened on the top. A very typical feature is the high edge and collar around a relatively small filling hole, which, according to researchers (Howland 1958, 166; Bailey 1975, 90), is characteristic for earlier examples of this type. The rhombic shape of the nozzle is also probably connected with the first series of this type (Sezer and Tezgör 1995, 117).

This type is known in Cypriot typology as type Vessberg 7 (Vessberg and Westholm 1956, 186). The name of this type is rather conventional as it comes from the numerous examples discovered during excavations in Ephesus (Broneer 1930, 66), but it seems to still be a valid term now. Due to the many findings of moulds from the John Turtle Wood and Austrian excavations in the area of both the Artemision and the city (Bailey 1975, 88, 90), it is highly probable that this type did indeed derive from Ephesus. It is also worth remarking that this type of lamp was widespread across the whole Mediterranean. It is well represented in Greece – for example on the Athenian Agora – type 49A (Howland 1958, 166-169), in Corinth – type XIX (Broneer 1930, 66-70) and it has also been found in Delos (Bruneau 1965, 51-78). In the latter many Ephesian lamps were found and in general typology they form 11 groups. Such objects have also been found in Tarsus (group VI) (Goldman and Jones 1950, 89-90) and in the Syro-Palestinian region (Sussman 2009, 66-70).

In Cyprus, they are known from Kition (Vessberg and Westholm 1956, 122, fig. 37: 15), Kourion, Nea Paphos (Młynarczyk 1978, 242-245), Palaipaphos (Bezzola 2004, 48-50), Geronisos (Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 297, nos 29, 30), Panagia Ematousa (Wismann 2006, 348), Salamis (Oziol 1977, 60-63), Kyra (Pieridou 1963, 36, nos 46, 48) and the collections

of Zintilis (Lubsen-Admiraal 2003, 37, no. 930) and Pierides (Oziol 1993, 27, no. 22). Wismann (2006, 348) considers that they occur mainly in the southern part of the island. Among the great number of imports we can also find local imitations (see below). It has been affirmed that this type of lamp was produced in different areas and neighbourhoods and that their popularity was enormous.

Generally, Vessberg dated this type to the last two centuries BC (Vessberg and Westholm 1956, 186). However, according to later studies, it could be dated more precisely between the second half of the 2nd and the 1st century BC (Młynarczyk 1998, 56). It is also possible that local imitations were produced up until the 1st century AD (Hayes 1980, 15; Sussman 2009, 70). The main distinctive feature of this type is its dark gray clay (10YR 5/1) with numerous particles of mica. This ware is often quite similar to Knidian (Hayes 1980, 15) and Pergamene (Sezer and Tezgör 1995, 115) and this renders provenance difficult to define. However, the slip on the surface seems to be darker, even black (7.5YR 2.5/1), and glossier when compared to Knidian products. A higher content of mica can also be observed in the Ephesian type. Differences between Pergamene and Ephesian products may be observed in terms of form and ornamentation (Sezer and Tezgör 1995, 116).

The decoration of the Ephesian type includes both geometric and floral motives (rosettes, leaves, palmettes), which take up a large part of the surface. The nozzle is also decorated.

Findings from the Agora provide further proof that the Ephesian type was quite popular in Cyprus in the Hellenistic period. Examples of imports are attested here, while the existence of local production on the island is also confirmed. Two moulds found in the House of Dionysos in Nea Paphos (Nicolaou 1972, 315; Bailey 1975, 90) suggested Cypriot production of the Ephesian type (Pl. 1: 1). This was confirmed when other lamps made of a different clay, distinctive of Cypriot pottery were found. Such examples are known from Nea Paphos (Młynarczyk 1978, nos 34-42) and Geronisos (Connelly and Młynarczyk 2002, 296, no. 12). They are buff-grayish or pale pink and covered with red, dark brown to black slip. One fragment from the Agora could perhaps be interpreted as a local imitation of the type.

The coming seasons of excavation in the area of the Agora will hopefully furnish us with further examples of this kind of lamp. Although there is clear evidence that the Ephesian type had an influence on Cypriot production, it has not yet been sufficiently investigated. Both imports, which demonstrate

the great importance of trade contact between Nea Paphos and Asia Minor, as well as local derivatives of the Ephesian patterns could be very useful in further studies.

Catalogue

1. Inv. no. PAP12/II/220/L1. Nozzle of a lamp. Preserved L: 5.2cm, ht.: 2.4cm. Gray fine clay (2.5Y 5/1) with very dark gray slip (1 for Gley 3N); large amount of mica. *References*: cf. cat. no. 2. (Pl. 1: 2).

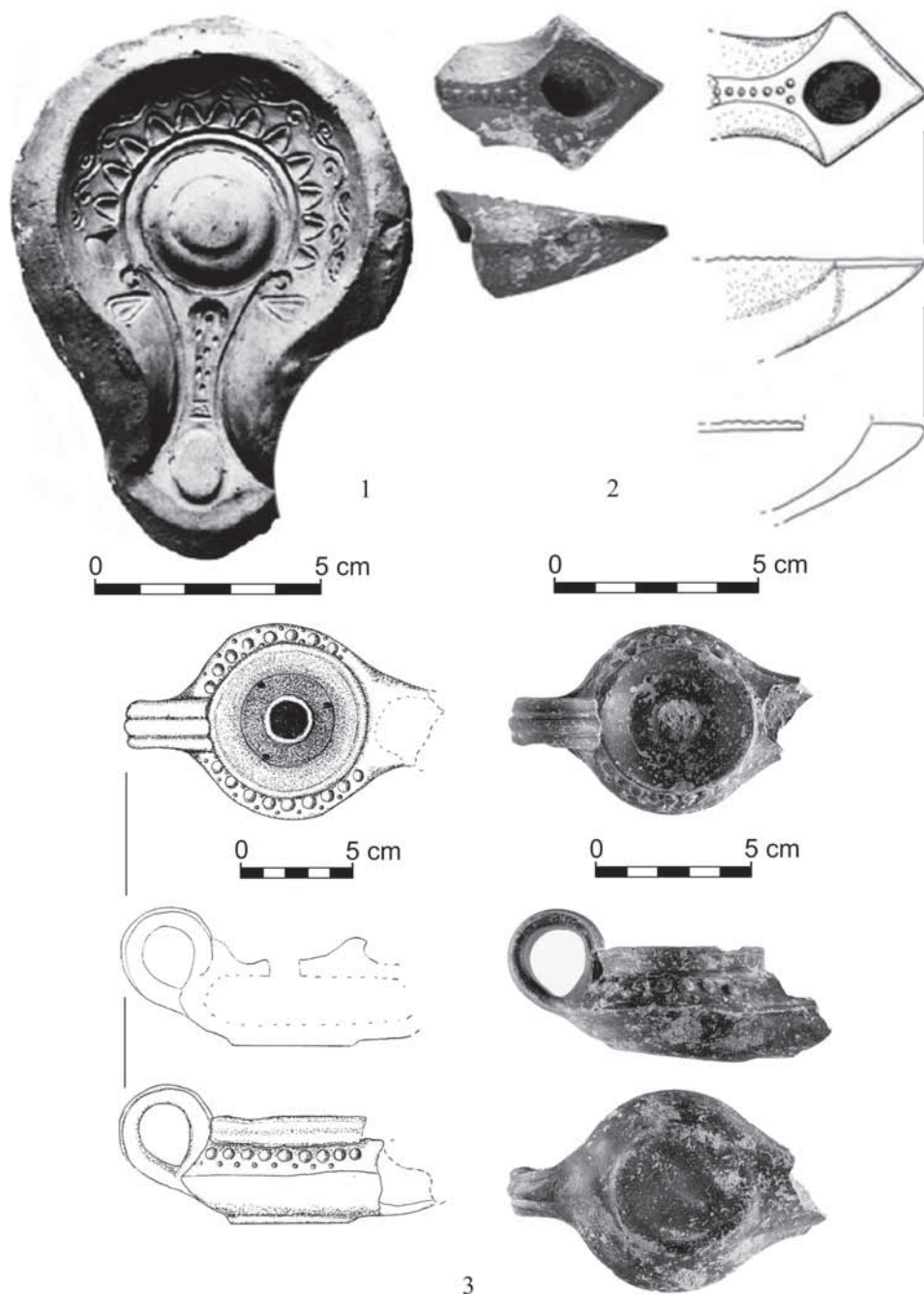
2. Inv. no. PAP13/II/254/L1. Part of body of a lamp. Diam. 6.4cm; preserved L: 9.7cm, ht. (with handle): 4.4cm. Gray fine clay (10YR 5/1) with black slip (7.5YR 2.5/1); large amount of mica. *References*: Vessberg and Westholm 1956, fig. 37: 19; Howland 1958, nos 649-664, pls 27, 49; Bailey 1965, no. 224; Bruneau 1965, pl. 17, no. 2996; Oziol 1977, no. 135, pls 8, 57 and nos 134, 140, pl. 8; Oziol 1993, no. 22, fig. 5; Hayes 1980, nos 55-56; Bezzola 2004, no. 225, tav. 22; Sussman 2009, nos 349-358. (Pl. 1: 3).

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Pl. 1. 1 – Lamp mould for the upper part of the ‘Ephesian’ lamp found in the House of Dionisos. Reproduced from Nicolaou 1972, fig. 37, pl. 66

2 – Nozzle of the Ephesian lamp inv. no. PAP12/II/220/L1. Photo by M. Iwan

3 – Ephesian lamp inv. no. PAP13/II/254/L1. Photo by M. Iwan