
Maria Jaworska 

University of Warsaw

SOME REMARKS ON THE IVY LEAF LAMP FOUND IN PTOLEMAIS

Abstract: During the Polish excavations in Ptolemais (Libya), a unique terracotta lamp top of the Cretan Ivy Leaf type was found. It is one of only few known specimens of that kind found on the site. The article provides a brief discussion on the Cretan influences seen in the lychnological material found in Ptolemais. It also draws attention to the problem of studying the relations between the two parts of the Roman province Crete and Cyrenaica.

Keywords: oil lamp; ivy leaf lamp; Cyrenaica; Crete; insularity

Introduction

Although, rooted in Hellenistic types, Ivy Leaf lamps are commonly attributed specifically to the local Cretan production from the mid. 1st to the 3rd century AD (Callaghan 2016, 231-232, 236; Catling and Catling 1992, 265-266. Cf. Bailey 1988, 215). They were particularly popular between the reign of Tiberius until Trajan/Hadrian. Their shapes and sizes differ, however most of them have a 'round body in plan, prominent nozzle bridge and carefully modelled round nozzle mouth' (Catling and Catling 1992, 265). The handle has a deep groove. The most popular decorative ornament is of ivy leaf in a high relief which takes the form of a heart shape with a deep groove in the middle and small circles in each part. The leaves are pointed downward and usually put on the nozzle bridge as well as on the shoulders. The ivy leaves commonly occur with other decoration like nipples and vertical grooves (one, two or three) in different arrangements

but always symmetrical on both sides of the shoulders. There are also less frequent motifs such as an incised chevron on the nozzle bridge or molded tongues, circlets and zig-zags on shoulders.

Lamps of the Ivy Leaf type were massively produced in Crete and exported to the centers in North Africa including Marina el-Alamein (Majcherek and Zych 2011, 365-373) or cities of the Libyan Pentapolis (see below).

The set of lamps found during the Polish excavations in Ptolemais covers the entire period of the town's functioning from the Hellenistic times until the Arab conquest. The Ivy Leaf lamp top found in Ptolemais (Pl. 1: 1) is of great value considering the on-going discussion of the relations between the two regions (in the political, cultural, social and commercial field) since most of the comparisons between Crete and Cyrenaica are based upon materials from Berenice (Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi) and Cyrene (Chevrollier 2016, 23; Harrison 1985, 365-373. Cf. Wright 1999, 172). Thus, material from Ptolemais, especially lamps from the Polish excavations, should be considered as important new data.

Lamps found in Ptolemais and other Cyrenaican cities

The basic reference point for studies of oil lamps found in Cyrenaica is the catalogue and articles published by Donald Bailey of several thousand finds from Berenice (Bailey 1985a; Bailey 1985b; Bailey 1988). The descriptions of the lamps and their fragments in most cases include references to their chronology, analogies and provenance. There are 34 Ivy Leaf lamps and fragments attested in Berenice (Bailey 1985a, 4-5, No. C 7-18, pl. 1). Six of them are identified by Bailey as local imitations of Cretan products (Bailey 1985a, 22, No. C 110-115, Pl. 6-7, fig. 3). The fact that the Ivy Leaf lamps are the only mold-made local late Hellenistic lamps found on the site is worth mentioning (Bailey 1985a, 12). Other examples of Hellenistic lamps were wheel-made, mostly of Howland type 25A and B, Howland 32.¹

Unfortunately, lamps from Cyrene have not yet been published in a vast catalogue. Instead, they appear in articles in which they are studied in terms of iconography, the context of finding, or attempts to determine provenance (Publications from this site were developed by Italian archaeologists e.g.: Luni 1985; Longarini 2014; Panico 2006a; Panico 2006b; Panico 2014;

¹ On the typology see Howland 1958.

Santucci, Uhlenbrock 2013). Until now, none of the Ivy Leaf lamp was published.²

Only 19 lamps have been included in the monumental Ptolemais monograph by Carl Kraeling (Kraeling 1962, pl. LXIID, pl. LXIII A, B). They were grouped, for their Greek, Hellenistic, Roman and Islamic forms, but apart from creating such a classification, no more thorough research was carried out in this area. Additionally, none of those lamps were published in the publications from Tocra (Hayes 1973).

All the lamps in the local Archaeological Museum in Tolmeita³ have been carefully compiled and published in the form of a catalogue by Emanuela Fabbriotti (Fabbriotti 2001). In her catalogue, three lamps are of Ivy Leaf type (Fabbriotti 2001, 16-17, No. 35-37, tav. III).

When it comes to publications from the Polish excavations conducted in Ptolemais, two lamps appeared in the archaeological guide to Ptolemais by Tomasz Mikocki (2006, 69, fig. 96-97). Few other fragments were included in the ceramological studies conducted by Michał Auch (2012, 369-385).⁴ A BA thesis devoted to late Roman terracotta lamps made in a workshop operating in the so-called building B in Ptolemais was written at the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw (Celiński 2006). Single finds, valuable due to their iconography or context of finding, have been published in several articles, but they have never been independently elaborated (see Jaworski 2008, 42, fig. 34; Rekowska 2013, figs. 8, 10, 12; Bąk 2017a, 2017b, forthcoming).

*Ivy Leaf lamp*⁵

The Ivy Leaf lamp top from Ptolemais (inv. No. L/332/06⁶) was found in Room 27 in the domestic area of the *insula* (Pl. 1: 2). Unfortunately, the context cannot provide specific dating since the lamp was deposited in the destruction layer under the wall. The only conclusion that could be made

² It is very probable that ivy leaf lamps were uncovered in Cyrene, however, none of them were published.

³ The set of lamps included in the Museum come from American, British and Italian excavations.

⁴ Finds were subjected to chemical analysis using the x-ray fluorescence spectrometer with the detector connected to a scanning electron microscope.

⁵ The description of the lamp is based on photographic documentation. Clay characteristics are therefore omitted.

⁶ The lamp was briefly published in the article regarding the Cretan influences in Marina el Alamein see Majcherek and Zych 2011, 365, fig. 9.

is that the lamp must have been deposited there before the earthquake in mid. 3rd century AD. However, based on analogies from Berenice, the most probable dating is from the mid. 1st century AD.

The fragment lacks a handle, nozzle and parts of the discus and rim.⁷ The lamp fits into the standard Ivy Leaf type ornamentation. Grooves, nipple, grooves, ivy leaf, grooves, nipple, grooves, ivy leaf – on – bridge read from the handle to the nozzle. The rim consists of a syntax with a 2-3-3-2 groove count (from the handle to the nozzle). There is a ridge around the discus, a ring within it and a centrally placed filling hole. A similar lamp, attributed to local production, was found in Berenice (Bailey 1985a, 22, No. C 114, pl. 7). Based on this, it is plausible to suggest a Cyrenaican production, yet only ceramological studies can provide the absolute answer. When it comes to Crete, more analogies can be found, with the lamps from Knossos possessing the greatest number of similarities (Catling and Catling 1992, 266-267, No. L90, L92, L94-97 pl. 228-229).

Tendencies in local production in *Crete and Cyrenaica*

Looking briefly at the tendencies in local production in both regions, most of the similarities are visible in the period from the 2nd until the early 3rd century AD. At that time, the local production of Roman type lamps (standard Loeschcke VIII⁸) was at its peak. Lamps were produced in almost every part of the Roman Empire with inspirations taken from Italian archetypes as well as local fashion.

One of the most prominent workshops in which lamps were found in large number both in Crete and Cyrenaica, was that of Gamos (see Bąk, forthcoming). Lamps from that manufacturer had a round shape with shoulders usually decorated with the ovules, sometimes plain or with leaves and bunches of grapes (Pl. 1: 3). The nozzle could be round, square or heart-shaped. More than 20 iconographic motifs adorning the discs of the lamps signed ΓΑΜΟΥ (Paribeni 1907, 379, No. 37; *I. Cret.* I, viii: 79 No. 42; I, xii: 97 No. 6; I, xvi: 149 No. 54; II, xxiv: 276 No. 19-20; II, xxx: 315 No. 6; III, iii: 73 No. 61; IV: 419 No. 540; see Chaniotis 1989, 70, 2005, 103-107) were distinguished and almost all of them appear on lamps found in both regions (in Crete: e.g.: SEG XXXII 906; XXXV 986; XXXVII 754; Hayes 1971, 273, No. 53; Catling and Catling 1992, 273 No. L208; 281 No. L318, 306 No. L691-693; Martin 1997, 278 No. 38 = SEG XLVII 1391

⁷ Fragment measures 10.5cm x 6cm.

⁸ On typology see Loeschcke 1919.

No. 2; Sapouna 1998, 175 No. 4-6 a-e, g-h, 179 No. 44-46 a, 182 No. 105-106 b, 183 No. 110-113 b, 184 No. 118 g, 190 No. 188-189 b, 190 No. 190 b, 193 No. 274-275 a, f, 195 No. 312-313 a, 196 No. 325-326 b, 197 No. 328-331 b, d, 197-198 No. 332 b, e, g, perhaps 191 No. 260-262 g; Csapo and Geagan and Johnston 2000, 132 No. 101; Baldini and Parello 2001, 123 No. 127, 129 No. 204. In Cyrenaica: Bailey 1985a, 123 No. C843, 124 No. C848-850 (plus 3 base fragments signed ΓΑΜΟΥ), 132 No. C915 (plus one fragment from a parallel mold), probably also 137 No. C966; Panico 2014, 273-276 figs. 12-15).

Surprisingly, the only other form of lamp that bore the Gamos signature is the Ivy Leaf lamp dated from the late 2nd – early 3rd century AD found in Knossos (Catling and Catling 1992, 273, No. L208, pl. 232, 255). It is possible that the manufacturer attempted to satisfy the market that demanded both traditional Cretan lamps as well as new, Roman shapes and decorations. Workshops' functioning and the pattern of distribution are still to be determined however most of the scholars attribute it to the Cretan manufacture (e.g. Mercado 1974, 236-237; Sapouna 1998, 95). Other lamps bearing signs of provincial manufacture also show many similarities between the two regions. Broneer XXVII⁹ with shoulder decoration consisting of ovules and bars, was a very popular form (Pl. 1: 4).

Lamps dated to later periods do not represent such strong connections. In contrast to Crete, Cyrenaican manufacture drew much more from Western Tripolitanian patterns (Hayes 1973, 118; Bailey 1985b, 198; Harrison 1985, 371).

Connecting Crete and Cyrenaica

Up until now, several scholars raised the question concerning the premises on a combination of Crete and Cyrenaica into one administrative organism (see notes in Chevrollier 2016, 13). Why and precisely when was the province formed and how did the managing of this double province work? Cretan influences in Cyrenaica have been noticed throughout the region's history, even in the Bronze Age, before the colonization by Theraeans in the 7th century BC (Chevrollier 2016, 12-13). One of the reasons for those contacts is definitely the close distance between the two. The insularity of both lands (geographically Cretan – by the sea and Cyrenaican – by the deserts) made the maritime transportation the most

⁹ On typology see Broneer 1930.

convenient one since the journey between Gortyn to Apollonia took only two days and nights (Strabo 10.4.5).

Although the last Ptolemaic king of Cyrene – Apion – bequeathed his reign to Rome in 96 BC, it took some time until it was organized into the province firstly in 74 BC, and then, after a short period of internal turbulence, in 67 BC. Around that time Cretan cities were conquered and some scholars put the year 67 BC as the beginning of the functioning of the joint province (Kouremenos 2018, 45). At this time, the Roman issues of coins in two different series were struck in Crete and Cyrenaica (Asolati 2011, 98, Nos 141-143). One of the reasons for consolidating land at that time could be Cyrenaica's depopulation due to attacks from pirates and people from the south (Reynolds and Lloyd 1996, 621; Braund 1985, 319-320).

Not much is known about the period until the war in 44 BC, when Cyrenaica was given to Cassius and Crete to Brutus only on paper. Under Marc Anthony, both lands were probably given to Cleopatra or Cleopatra Selene (Reynolds and Lloyd 1996, 621, 630-631). The victorious armies of Augustus occupied Crete and Cyrenaica and after his reforms in 27 BC the regions became the new *Crete and Cyrenaica* senatorial province with the capital city of Gortyn. Undeniably, since the reign of Augustus, the province started the period of relative welfare and stabilization. It seems likely that the governing fashion must have been very flexible since the administration had to face different problems in each part. The province existed until Diocletian reforms when it was divided into the provinces of Libya Superior and Crete with capital cities being Ptolemais and Gortyn (Lloyd 1990, 41).

For a long time studies on Roman Crete and Cyrenaica have been taken separately. Differences in the state of research in both lands as well as focusing on other aspects of interest resulted in the lack of a thorough monography of the province. Studies show that apart from many discrepancies e.g. in the architectural tendencies, there are categories of finds that might be of use in terms in determining how the connection at the beginning of the Imperial period influenced each part of the province. Those categories are definitely coins and terracotta lamps.

General conclusions

Based on the lamp of the Ivy Leaf type found in Ptolemais we can find analogies both in the Cyrenaican material attributed to local imitations

of Cretan products (lamp from Berenice) and in original Cretan lamps found, for example, in Knossos. The actual place of manufacture could only be determined by analyzing the clays. Locally produced lamps of the Ivy Leaf type, as well as those of Gamos and others mostly dated back to the 2nd – early 3rd century are found in large amount in both Crete and Cyrenaica. In light of lychnological material, such strong influences between the regions are not visible in later periods.

A thorough discussion of the *Crete and Cyrenaica* province is still to be awaited. The insularity of both regions resulted in different economies, individual histories and cultural development. What is an important question is how the joining has influenced the cultural and social norms that have already been grounded in the two?

References

- I. Cret.* = M. Guarducci (ed.), *Inscriptiones Creticae*, vol. 1-4, Rome 1935-1950
- SEG* = J.J.E. Hondius *et al.* (eds), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden then Amsterdam then Leiden, 1923 ff.
- Asolati M. 2011.** *Nummi Aenei Cyrenaici. Struttura e cronologia della monetazione bronzea cirenaica di età greca e romana (325 a.C.-180 d.C.). Cirene, Atene d'Africa 4. (Monografie di Archeologia Libica 32).* Roma.
- Auch M. 2012.** The resource base for the production of local pottery in Ptolemais in the light of preliminary research. In J. Żelazowski (ed.), *Ptolemais in Cyrenaica. Studies in Memory of Tomasz Mikocki*, 359-385. (*Ptolemais* 1). Warsaw.
- Bailey D. M. 1985a.** *Excavations at Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi (Berenice) 3/2. The Lamps.* Tripoli.
- Bailey D. M. 1985b.** The lamps of Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi (Berenice): Imported and Local Products. In G. Barker, J. Little and J. Reynolds (eds), *Cyrenaica in Antiquity*, 195-204. (*BAR-IS* 236). Oxford.
- Bailey D. M. 1988.** *A Catalogue of the Lamps in the British Museum 3. Roman Provincial Lamps.* London.

- Baldini I. and Parello G. 2001.** Lucerne. In A. Di Vita (ed.), *Gortina III. Lo scavo del Pretorio (1989–1995). I materiali.* (Monografie della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente 12), 114–189. Padova.
- Bąk M. 2017a.** Lux romanitatis. Lampki terakotowe znalezione w Ptolemais w Cyrenajce. *SAMAI 2*, 88–102.
- Bąk M. 2017b.** Lampka z przedstawieniem centaury znaleziona w Ptolemais w Cyrenajce. Ikonografia – datowanie – kontekst archeologiczny, *Akademickie Zeszyty Naukowe Piast 1*, 191–207.
- Bąk M. forthcoming.** *Oil lamps attributed to the Gamos workshop found in Ptolemais, Cyrenaica.*
- Braund D. 1985.** The social and economic context of the Roman annexation of Cyrenaica. In G. Barker, J. Lloyd and J. Reynolds (eds), *Cyrenaica in Antiquity*, 319–325. (BAR-IS 236). Oxford.
- Callaghan P. J. 2016.** The problems with Claudius. Some revisions in ceramic chronology in central Crete during the Julio-Claudian Period, *BSA 111*, 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068245416000083>.
- Catling H. W. and Catling E. A. 1992.** The Lamps. In L. H. Sackett (ed.), *Knossos. From Greek City to Roman Colony. Excavations at the Unexplored Mansion 2*, 257–322. Oxford.
- Celiński Ł. 2006.** *Lampki terakotowe z budynku B z polskich wykopalisk w Ptolemais.* Unpublished BA thesis written under the supervision of M. Rekowska. Warszawa.
- Chaniotis A. 1989.** Some more Cretan names. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 77*, 67–81.
- Chaniotis A. 2005.** Inscribed instrumenta domestica and the economy of Hellenistic and Roman Crete. In Z. H. Archibald, J. K. Davies and V. Gabrielsen (eds), *Making, Moving and Managing. The New World of Ancient Economies*, 92–116. Oxford.
- Chevrollier F. 2016.** From Cyrene to Gortyn. Notes on the relationship between Crete and Cyrenaica under Roman domination (1st century BC–4th century AD). In J.E. Francis and A. Kouremenos (eds), *Roman Crete. New Perspectives*, 11–26. Oxford.
- Csapo E., Geagan D. and Johnston A. W. 2000.** The Iron Age Inscriptions. In J. W. Shaw and M. C. Shaw (eds), *Kommos 4. The Greek Sanctuary 1*. 101–134. Princeton–Oxford.
- Fabbriotti E. 2001.** *Catalogo delle lucerne di Tolemaide (Cirenaica).* (BAR-IS 962). Oxford.

- Harrison G. 1985.** The Joining of Cyrenaica to Crete. In G. Barker, J. Lloyd and J. Reynolds (eds), *Cyrenaica in Antiquity*, 365-373. (BAR-IS 236). Oxford.
- Hayes J. 1971.** Four Early Roman groups from Knossos, *BSA* 66, 249-275. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068245400019183>.
- Hayes J. 1973.** The Pottery. In J. Boardman and J. Hayes (eds), *Excavations at Tocra 1963-1965. The Archaic Deposits II and Later Deposits, Supplement 10*. Oxford.
- Howland R. H. 1958.** *The Athenian Agora 4. Greek Lamps and Their Survivals*. Princeton, New Jersey.
- Kouremenos A. 2018.** In the heart of the wine-dark sea: Cretan insularity and identity in the Roman Period. In A. Kouremenos (ed.), *Insularity and Identity in the Roman Mediterranean*, 41-64. Oxford.
- Kraeling C. 1962.** *Ptolemais. City of the Libyan Pentapolis*. Chicago.
- Lloyd J. A. 1990.** The cities of Cyrenaica in the third century AD. *Giornata Lincea sulla Archeologia Cirenaica (Roma, 3 Novembre 1987)*, 41-53. Roma.
- Loeschcke S. 1919.** *Lampen aus Vindonissa*. Zürich.
- Longarini C. 2014.** Materiali dai santuari di Demetra e di Apollo Apotropaïos: anfore, dolia, balsamarie, lucerne. In M. Luni (ed.), *Cirene greca e romana, Cirene Atene d'Africa* 7, 147-160. (Monografie di Archeologia Libica 36). Roma.
- Luni M. 1985.** Atelier di lucerne di Cirene. In J. Reynolds (ed.), *Society and Economy in Classical Cyrenaica*, 259-276. Oxford.
- Majcherek G. and Zych I. 2011.** The evidence for Cretan presence in the ancient town of Marina el-Alamein. In H. Meyza and I. Zych (eds), *Classica Orientalia. Essays Presented to Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski on his 75th Birthday*, 357-378. Warsaw.
- Martin A. 1997.** Lucerne. In A. Di Vita and A. Martin (eds), *Gortina II. Pretorio. Il materiale degli scavi colini 1970-1977*, 264-290. (Monografie della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente 7). Padova.
- Mercando L. 1974.** Lucerne romane del museo di Iraklion. In *Antichità Cretesi. Studi in onore di Doro Levi* 2, 235-239. (Cronache di Archeologia 13). Catania.
- Mikocki T. 2006.** *Ptolemais. Archaeological Tourist Guide*. Warsaw.
- Panico C. 2006a.** Le lucerne di età Greca e Romana. In A. Ermeti et alii. Ceramica dal quartiere dell'Agorà. In M. Luni (ed.), *Cirene, Atene d'Africa* 1, 93-97. (Monografie di Archeologia Libica 28). Roma.

- Panico C. 2006b.** Lo Scavo di un deposito votive nel tempio di Demetra: le lucerne. In M. Luni (ed.), *Il nuovo santuario extraurbano di Demetra, Cirene, Atene d'Africa*, 165-166. (*Monografie di Archeologia Libica* 28). Roma.
- Panico C. 2014.** Importazioni e produzione locale di lucerne in eta romana a Cirene. In M. Luni (ed.), *Cirene greca e romana. Cirene Atene d'Africa* 7, 269-294. (*Monografie di Archeologia Libica* 36). Roma.
- Paribeni R. 1907.** Iscrizioni Cretesi Inedite. In G. DeSanctis and R. Paribeni, *Nuovi Studii e Scoperte in Gortyna*, *MonAnt* 18, 177-384.
- Rekowska M. 2013.** L'amour à Ptolémaïs... Scènes érotiques sur des objets découverts par les fouilles polonaises. In W. Dobrowolski (ed.), *Et in Arcadia ego. Studia memoriae professoris Thomae Mikocki dicata*, 61-73. Warsaw.
- Reynolds J. and Lloyd J. A. 1996.** Cyrene. In A. Bowman, E. Champlin and A. Lintott (eds), *The Cambridge Ancient History 10: The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.-A.D. 69*, 619-640. Cambridge.
- Santucci A. and Uhlenbrock J. P. 2013.** Cyrene Papers: The Final Report. Richard Norton's Exploration of the Northern Necropolis of Cyrene (24 October 1910 – 4 May 1911): From Archives to Archaeological Contexts. *Libyan Studies* 44, 9-55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026371890000964X>.
- Sapouna P. 1998.** *Die Bildlampen römischer Zeit aus der Idäischen Zeusgrotte auf Kreta*. (*BAR-IS* 696). Oxford.
- Wright G. R. H. 1999.** Roman Cyprus and Roman Cyrenaica. An architectural contrast within historical parallels. *Thetis* 5-6, 169-195.

Maria Jaworska
c/o Institute of Archaeology
University of Warsaw
maria.marta.bak@gmail.com



1



2



3



4

Pl. 1: 1. Ivy Leaf lamp top found during Polish excavations in Ptolemais. Property of the Polish Archaeological Mission of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

Pl. 1: 2. Room 27 on the plan of Polish excavations in Ptolemais. Property of the Polish Archaeological Mission of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

Pl. 1: 3. Lamp attributed to the Gamos workshop found in Ptolemais. Inv. No. L/099/04. Property of the Polish Archaeological Mission of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

Pl. 1: 4. Lamp with bars on the rim. Inv. No. L/094/04. Property of the Polish Archaeological Mission of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw