

Nouveautés Lychnologiques Lychnological News



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Avant-propos

C'est à l'occasion du 1er congrès archéologique international d'étude sur le luminaire antique et de l'exposition « Lumière ! L'éclairage dans l'antiquité » organisée au Musée romain de Nyon que paraît « Nouveautés lychnologiques », un volume propre à favoriser la diffusion des connaissances et la confrontation des idées, mais offrant aussi aux spécialistes l'opportunité de soumettre à la critique de leurs pairs non seulement les résultats de leurs recherches mais encore de nouvelles manières d'interroger et de comprendre. La variété et la richesse des contributions illustrent l'intérêt et le renouveau des études relatives aux lampes, une discipline à part entière, certes, mais qui ne saurait se suffire à elle-même : il convient plus que jamais de se garder d'une spécialisation outrancière qui se ferait au préjudice d'une vue d'ensemble aussi large que possible. Si les études ponctuelles, mais précises, constituent un préalable nécessaire à toute synthèse, elles ne sauraient demeurer une fin en soi. La science lychnologique, à l'instar de la céramologie, de la numismatique, de l'archéo-botanique ou de la paléo-trichologie, reste indissociable de l'archéologie : à partir de vestiges matériels, aussi modestes soient-ils, il convient essentiellement de saisir l'homme dans sa complexité et sa relation avec l'univers. Dans cette quête, longue et difficile, parfois désespérée, il importe d'améliorer sans cesse les outils de détermination et d'interprétation, de veiller à la multiplicité et à la diversité des approches, qu'il s'agisse d'analyses de laboratoire, d'études typologiques, chrono-quantitatives, technologiques, iconographiques ou économiques, sans oublier les dimensions culturelles et anthropologiques et tout en restant à l'écoute d'autres spécialistes. C'est dans cette perspective que les auteurs du présent volume ont voulu placer leurs travaux et qu'il conviendra de situer les études à venir. La réflexion sur l'homme à partir des objets matériels et de leur contexte ne saurait se limiter à un simple exercice, aussi brillant soit-il : elle resterait totalement vaine si elle ne servait à allumer et à entretenir, goutte à goutte, notre propre lampe...

Genève, le 22 septembre 2003

Prof. Daniel Paunier

Éditorial

Décidément, l'année 2003 a été placée sous le signe des lampes et de la lumière. L'hiver nous quittait sur deux belles expositions sur ce thème, organisées par les collègues des musées de Veszprem (Hongrie) et de Jena (Allemagne).

Puis, au printemps, le 15 mai précisément, ce fut l'inauguration de l'exposition « LVMIERE ! L'éclairage dans l'Antiquité » au Musée romain de Nyon (Suisse).

Autour de cette exposition, le Musée romain et sa conservatrice Véronique Rey-Vodoz, avec l'aide du Professeur Daniel Paunier, ont accepté de soutenir le 1er Congrès international d'étude sur le luminaire antique, placé sous le haut patronage de M. Charles Kleiber, secrétaire d'Etat à la Science et à la Recherche.

Ce congrès, qui a réuni plus de quatre-vingt spécialistes en la matière de vingt-deux nationalités, a vu la fondation de l'Association Lychnologique Internationale.

En marge du congrès, LychnoServices, créé par Samuel Crettenand et Laurent Chrzanovski, se propose de mettre en valeur le patrimoine luminaire antique sous toutes ses formes, de la préhistoire au Moyen-âge, au moyen de quatre vecteurs d'information (site internet, publications, outils pédagogiques et bases de données scientifiques).

Nouveautés Lychnologiques / Lychnological News a donc remis au goût du jour le terme (ou plutôt le néologisme) "lychnologique", déjà proposé par les participants de la table ronde "*Les lampes de terre cuite en Méditerranée des origines à Justinien*", organisée par le C.N.R.S. (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) à Lyon, du 7 au 11 décembre 1981 (et publiée en 1987 à Paris sous la direction T. Oziol).

Ce volume propose au lecteur - spécialiste ou simple amateur - vingt et un articles de tous horizons (Allemagne, Belgique, Canada, Espagne, France, Israël, Italie, Liban, Palestine, Suède), présentant des lampes, presque toutes inédites, issues de fouilles ou de musées.

Par ailleurs, la thématique des premières lampes est traitée avec soin par Sophie A. De Beaune, et un article d'archéologie expérimentale de Christian-Heinrich Wunderlich complète ce recueil.

Nous vous souhaitons la plus agréable des lectures.

LychnoServices, Laurent Chrzanovski - octobre 2003

Lamps and lighting are definitely the prevailing themes of the year 2003. Winter ended with two wonderful exhibitions dedicated to this topic, exhibitions organized by colleagues of the museums of Veszprém in Hungary and of Jena in Germany. Then spring, and more precisely May 15th, saw the inauguration of the exhibition "LVMIERE! L'éclairage dans l'Antiquité" at the Roman Museum of Nyon (Switzerland).

Around this exhibition, the Roman Museum and its curator Ms Véronique Rey-Vodoz, in cooperation with Professor Daniel Paunier, have accepted to support the 1st International Study Congress on Ancient Lighting Devices, placed under the high patronage of Mr. Charles Kleiber, Secretary of State for Science and Research.

The congress, held from September 29th to October 4th, gathered experts in this field from twenty-two different countries. During the event, the International Lychnological Association (ILA) was officially founded.

In connection with the congress, LychnoServices, created by Samuel Crettenand and Laurent Chrzanovski, offers to highlight the heritage of ancient lighting devices in all its forms, from Prehistory to the Middle Ages, through four means of information (website, publications, educational tools and scientific databases).

Nouveautés Lychnologiques / Lychnological News has brought up to date the term (or rather the neologism) "lychnological", which was already suggested by the participants in the round table entitled "*Les lampes en terre cuite en Méditerranée des origines à Justinien*", organized by the CNRS¹ (National Centre for Scientific Research) in Lyon, from December 7th to 11th 1981 (and published in Paris in 1987 under T. Oziol's supervision).

This volume offers readers - specialists or amateurs - twenty-one papers from various countries (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Palestine, Spain, Sweden), featuring lamps coming from excavations or museums, most of them previously unpublished.

Moreover, some special topics have been included in the book: Ms Sophie A. De Beaune carefully details the theme of the first lamps and Mr. Christian-Heinrich Wunderlich delivers an interesting article of experimental archaeology.

We wish you pleasant reading.

LychnoServices, Laurent Chrzanovski - october 2003

Articles

A “Poor Man’s” Lamp?

Eléni P. Zoïtopóulou / John M. Fossey

Excavations frequently produce findings requiring complex explanations; they also not uncommonly produce small surprises and apparent enigmas or contradictions. We here present briefly one such small observation and a few methodological thoughts, derived therefrom, about the interpretation of objects whose stereotypical classification may need a more flexible approach.



The object here considered was discovered by one of us (Eléni P. Zoïtopóulou) in 1978 during her excavations for the Greek Archaeological Service on the Evstratiádhis groundplot on the North side of odhós Theátrou and thus near the civic centre of ancient Argos in the Eastern Peloponnesos. It was subsequently studied by us both in the summer of 1981.

It is a large, solidly made ceramic lid of characteristic Argive clay, light red in colour (2.5YR 6/6), of medium texture (several small, rounded and subangular black and some similar white inclusions with also some very tiny quartz particles) and covered all over with a slightly lustrous, light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) slip. The maximum diameter is 16.2 cm and the height 3.5 cm. Apart from one large chip and a few small ones, all around the edge of the rim, the object is complete and well preserved. In shape it resembles a shallow, round-bottomed bowl with a horizontal, flanged and out-turned rim, the latter decorated with two concentric grooves, and a central handle in the form of a vertical pillar with a widely thickened top. To some extent its shape, especially with the indentation of its base corresponding to the raised handle, is not unlike that of the *phiale mesomphalos* of earlier times.

This piece was found in the filling of a well (“Well A”) in the Northern part of the Evstratiádhis land where it is part of a possible domestic or artisanal building assemblage. Preparation of the final publication of the whole excavation is in hand (by Eléni P. Zoïtopóulou) but it may already be stated that the filling of the well is, as usual, mixed but indicates that the life of the building complex to which it belongs may have begun in the 4th century B.C.E. and certainly ran through the Hellenistic period.

By its form and its finish the lid is in no way unusual and is in agreement with this late Classical - Hellenistic date. What is remarkable is the presence across one particular part of the rim’s flat surface of a small area of concentrated burning. This is apparently no mere surface stain caused after burial; rather it has the slightly shiny, “fatty” appearance of the burning marks normally encountered around the nozzle of a lamp which has been used to burn a wick suspended in oil.

There would be nothing inherently impossible about the idea that this lid may indeed have been used as a simple lamp with a wick trailed across the rim (hence the essentially linear shape of the burnt area); indeed we need only recall the nature of the saucer-lamps of prehistoric times from which the later characteristic nozzle shape was to develop. The robust construction of this sort of lid would ensure its survival long after the ceramic container it was designed to cover (a storage or transport vessel of some sort) had perished when its extensive and thinner walls were broken. To reuse the lid for some other purpose after it could thus no longer serve its original function is but a most obvious and simple form of *recycling* to use a term of current parlance.

If we have called it a “Poor Man’s” lamp, this is by way of analogy with the simple form of the “Poor Man’s Bucket” produced by bronzesmiths in Roman imperial times, rather than necessarily suggesting a social or economic level for the person who seized on the simple idea of reusing the lid as a lamp; nor is it intended to limit the gender of that person to the male species! In fact, if this lid were filled to capacity (132+ ml) it would constitute a rather large lamp and thus imply the use of a considerable quantity of oil, not an inexpensive commodity (cf. the remarks in Aristophanes, *Wasps* 251-253, cited by BRUNEAU 1980: 39). Should it emerge finally that the building complex in which this lid/lamp was found was indeed of an artisanal nature it might argue simply that the practical consideration of providing a long-lasting light so as not to interrupt some task might weigh considerably more than any other question. This assumes, however, that the recipient would be filled to capacity. Canonical lamps of Hellenistic date tend to be much smaller in capacity. On all possible occasions over the last many years we have measured the capacities of lamps in a reasonable state of preservation and have rarely found one to exceed half the capacity of this lid/lamp (cf. some examples in Zoitopoulou & Fossey, 1992; many more cases are still in our files). What is more, the larger lamps we have measured have been essentially of Roman imperial date, some of them with two spouts, a feature which must have reduced appreciably the duration of burning. In Hellenistic times lamp capacities tend to be quite small, more in the range of a third or quarter, or even a fifth, of the c. 130 ml seen here; many examples, especially Egyptian ones, are even smaller, having capacities of only 20 ml or yet less.

Philippe Bruneau (1980: 20) once estimated that the burning times of an average lamp was about two and a half hours; he was discussing ordinary Hellenistic lamps with considerably smaller capacity than our present piece and deliberately excluded the rarer,

larger pieces. Overall little work seems to have been done on this aspect of lychnology and we might be allowed here to enter a plea to colleagues not only to publish as much as possible of ancient lamps but also to give, in addition to the standard dimensions of height, diameter etc., the capacity of their sufficiently preserved pieces; the process requires nothing more than a supply of water and a measuring cylinder and takes but a minute or two for each lamp. Some simple experiments measuring burning times with a range of oils (assuming that olive-oil did not enjoy a monopoly in this function) and possibly different wick materials would then enable us to calculate the burning time for each lamp with reasonable closeness, *always on the assumption that the lamp was filled to capacity*; in other words we could estimate the *potential* burning time for any particular lamp.

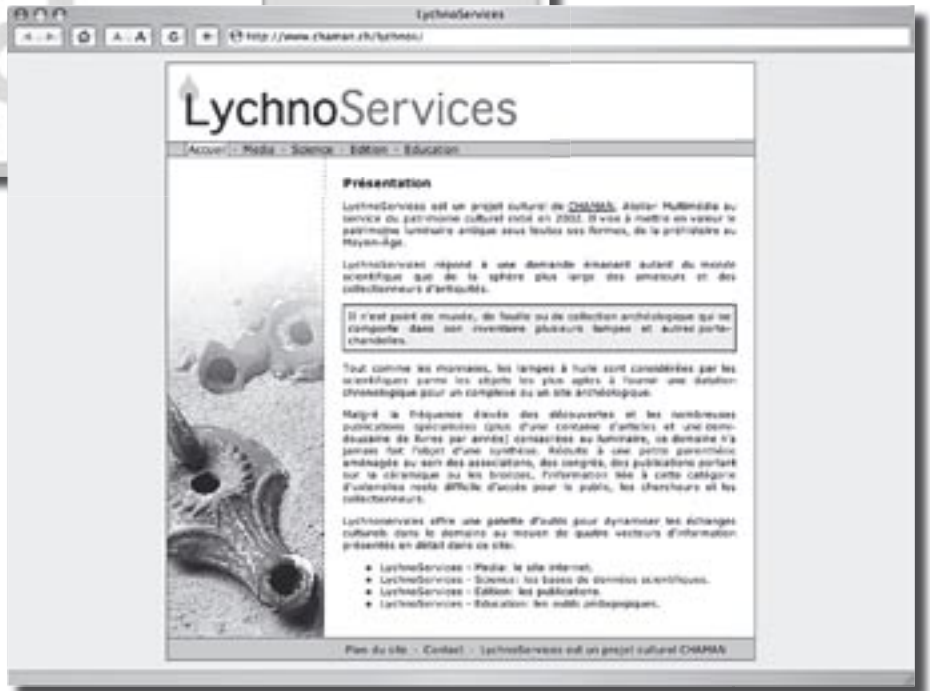
We may return to our lid/lamp for a final methodological observation. It seems that if we concede that, while every canonical lamp was intended to be (or *to represent* in the case of votives perhaps) a source of light, not every source of light had to be a canonical lamp. Other simple, flattish and open recipients could serve equally well if sometimes less decoratively, especially if they were not to be moved risking spills through their open tops. They would certainly avoid the cost of lamps produced by the moulding, often quite decorative, process. This is the same elasticity of approach to our standard classifications of object classes that reminds us, for example, that, while solid cones and pyramids of terracotta with a hole pierced near their apex may indeed have been mostly produced as loom weights, in coastal locations they could also have served equally well as fishing weights. Many more examples could doubtless be suggested for multiple uses of individual object types in antiquity. We were particularly fortunate that our “lid” carried the traces of burning to indicate its different use.

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International Lychnological Association

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