

POTTERY LAMPS FROM THE HELLMUTH COLLECTION OF EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES

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ABSTRACT: The Náprstek Museum houses a small collection of fourteen pottery lamps originating from Egypt which belonged to Vladimír Hellmuth-Brauner (1910–1982) and Marta Hellmuthová (1917–1988), the former of whom served as the Czechoslovak embassy at Cairo. The collection included the so-called ‘*echinus* lamp’, ‘dolphin lamp’, other two lamps of Hellenistic origin, ‘delta lamp’, two ‘frog lamps’, three Coptic, and three early Islamic slipper lamps; one of them with metallic green glaze. This collection of lamps clearly represents an intentionally and professionally assembled low-end representative set illustrating the development of lighting equipment in Egypt spanning more than 1,000 years of ancient and early medieval history. While most likely acquired in Cairo, most of the included specimens apparently came from Middle Egypt including Fayum.

KEYWORDS: Graeco-Roman Egypt – Coptic Egypt – Islamic Egypt – lychnology – pottery lamps – Hellmuth collection

Introduction

A small set of Egyptian antiquities collected by Vladimír Hellmuth-Brauner (1910–1982) and Marta Hellmuthová (1917–1988) is kept in the Náprstek Museum as part of the Collection of the Ancient Near East and Africa in Antiquity. From 1947 to 1950, Vladimír Hellmuth served at the Czechoslovak embassy at Cairo. It was apparently during this stay in Egypt when the Hellmuths acquired their collection. In 1957, Hellmuths were, based on fabricated charges, convicted of espionage. In 1960 they were granted an amnesty. As part of the persecution, their collection was seized by the Czechoslovak Republic. After receiving the pardon, Hellmuths were offered to recover their collection, but they agreed to it staying in the possession of the National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures.²

A major part of the Hellmuth collection of Egyptian antiquities comprises of fourteen mould-made pottery lamps, kept as the Inv. Nos. P 5909–5921. There is no accompanying documentation to the lamps coming from the original owners which could clarify where, when exactly, how, and from whom they were acquired or from which sites in Egypt they were ultimately recovered. The Hellmuth collection was entered into the official inventory of the Náprstek Museum only in 1980.³

This can be added to the other reasons for which none of them was included in the seminal papers of Haken (1958)⁴ and Marsa (1972)⁵ dealing with selected ancient Mediterranean pottery lamps in Czechoslovak collections, mainly in the National Museum. Only two lamps

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² Onderka 2024, pp. 426–427.

³ Onderka 2024, p. 427.

⁴ Haken 1958.

⁵ Marsa 1972.

from the Hellmuth collection have been published so far, namely by Kulichová in her paper on various ‘frog lamps’ from collections kept in Prague (1982).⁶ Publication of the major collection of ancient and early medieval Mediterranean pottery lamps kept in Collection of Classical Archaeology of the national Museum was completed by Svobodová (2006).⁷ The present paper aims to add up the largely fulfilled but still incomplete effort of publishing the ancient and early medieval pottery lamps kept in Czech collections by contributing the pieces from the Hellmuth collection. The lamps are presented below in roughly chronological order.

Inv. No. P 5921 [Pl. 1]

Measurements: l. 86 mm, w. 56 mm, h. 26 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: reddish brown (5YR 5/3); mould-made; without slip

State of preservation: complete; slightly worn off, especially on the bottom

Burning marks: on top of the nozzle around the wick hole

Origin:⁸ Alexandria, Lower Egypt, or Middle Egypt⁹

Date: late 2nd century BCE – 1st century CE¹⁰

Comparanda: esp. Bailey 1975, Cat. No. Q 565; Breccia 1926, Pl. XXXVIII, no. 19; Młynarczyk 1997, Fig. 107; Petrie 1905, Pl. LVIII, no. K 10; Robins 1939a, Cat. No. 6; Svobodová 2006, Cat. No. 40; also *inter alia* Bailey 1975, Cat. Nos. Q 566–570; Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. No. 34; Lightfoot 2021, Cat. No. 418; Młynarczyk 1997, Figs. 104–105, 108; Petrie 1905, Pl. LVIII, nos. K 18, K 20, K 24, K 28; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 51–63; Svobodová 2006, Cat. Nos. 41–42

Publication: unpublished

Lamps of this type were labelled by Petrie as ‘*echinus* lamps’.¹¹ Młynarczyk classified them as her subtype K.b¹² distinguished from others by the appearance of a ‘curved cable-patterned ridge’¹³ between the shoulder and nozzle. Such lamps were usually decorated on the shoulder with a so-called ‘Macedonian shield/ornament’¹⁴. The present piece featured a rather rough version of this design with the original rows of dots appearing between and around concentric semicircles replaced by cursory angular segments, akin to the pattern originally reserved only for the ridge at the stem of the nozzle. Considering also the particular construction of the palmette on the nozzle, another typical feature of the type, the present piece seems to be closest especially to a specimen recovered by Petrie at Middle Egyptian Herakleopolis (Ihnasya el-Medina).¹⁵ However, close parallels came also from the area of Alexandria.¹⁶

In general, the ‘*echinus*’/subtype K.b lamps were popular especially at Alexandria. They may be regarded as well-established and produced also in Lower Egypt and Middle Egypt including

⁶ Kulichová 1982.

⁷ Svobodová 2006. Apart from the papers mentioned above, she followed up also on Marsa 1973 and Kulichová 1983.

⁸ Here and below, the category of ‘origin’ is used to denote the place of manufacture of the lamps.

⁹ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 67–70.

¹⁰ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 70–71, Tab. 2; but cf. also *ibid.*, p. 71; Shier 1978, p. 22.

¹¹ Petrie 1905, p. 8.

¹² Młynarczyk 1997, esp. pp. 67–70.

¹³ Młynarczyk 1997, p. 67.

¹⁴ In general e.g. Liampi 1998; in particular *inter alia* Descoudres and Harrison 1996, pp. 86–87; Młynarczyk 1997, p. 70; Shier 1978, p. 22.

¹⁵ Petrie 1905, Pl. LVIII, no. K 10.

¹⁶ e.g. Breccia 1926, Pl. XXXVIII, no. 19; probably also Młynarczyk 1997, Fig. 107.

Fayum,¹⁷ but they appeared also much further afield.¹⁸ Their production falls mainly to late Ptolemaic period and certainly continued at least to the 1st century CE.¹⁹ It remains disputable whether it extended even later.²⁰

Inv. No. P 5916 [Pl. 2]

Measurements: l. 111 mm, w. 77 mm, h. 30 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: dark grey (2.5Y 4/1); mouldmade; slipped, dark grey (4/N)

State of preservation: complete; slightly worn, especially on the nozzle and the bottom

Burning marks: on top of the nozzle around the wick hole

Origin: Egypt, probably Lower Egypt²¹

Date: 1st century BCE – 1st century CE²²

Comparanda: esp. Bailey 1975, Cat. No. Q 556 = Robins 1939a, Cat. No. 3; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIXA, no. V 6; also *inter alia* Młynarczyk 1997, esp. Fig. 47; Petrie 1905, Pl. LX; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 21–30

Publication: unpublished

The lamp is the only one in the present collection fired in reducing atmosphere. It belongs amongst the so-called ‘dolphin lamps’, named so after the dolphin-shaped lugs regularly appearing on their sides.²³ The dolphin lugs could alternate with other more simple solutions as in the case of the present piece. As in this case, the lugs could be pierced for hanging. Otherwise, the group of ‘dolphin lamps’ was considerably heterogeneous both in morphology and iconography of the lamps. The present lamp is very close, but not identical, to an unprovenanced lamp kept at the British Museum in London²⁴ and a lamp excavated by Petrie at Herakleopolis (Ihnasya el-Medina).²⁵ There is possibly a simple mark in a form of a dot on the base.

Młynarczyk identifies these two and other similar lamps as the following of her type B-Prime and recognises them as belonging to the so-called ‘Bubastis ware’ of the eastern Delta.²⁶ Their production has been suggested to fall between the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE.²⁷

¹⁷ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 67–70; see also Bailey 1975, pp. 262–264.

¹⁸ *Inter alia* Bailey 1975, p. 262; Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 69–70; Shier 1978, p. 22.

¹⁹ Esp. Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 70–71, Tab. 2.

²⁰ Młynarczyk 1997, p. 71; Shier 1978, p. 22.

²¹ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 13, 47.

²² Bailey 1975, pp. 258–259; Młynarczyk 1997, p. 47.

²³ *Inter alia* Młynarczyk 1997, *passim*, esp. pp. 45–47; Petrie 1905, pp. 8–9; Shier 1978, pp. 20–21.

²⁴ Bailey 1975, Cat. No. Q 556 = Robins 1939a, Cat. No. 3. The similarities are better discernible from the photograph published in Robins 1939a.

²⁵ Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIXA, no. V 6.

²⁶ Młynarczyk 1997, p. 47.

²⁷ Bailey 1975, 258–259; Młynarczyk 1997, p. 47.

Inv. No. P 5909 [Pl. 3]

Measurements: l. 77 mm, w. 59 mm, h. 22 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: reddish brown (5YR 5/3); mould-made; lightly slipped, reddish brown (5YR 5/4)

State of preservation: incomplete, part of the nozzle missing, part of the shoulder chipped off; worn

Burning marks: on top of the nozzle on the edge of the wick hole

Origin: Fayum²⁸

Date: late 1st century BCE – 2nd century CE²⁹

Comparanda: esp. Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. No. 50; Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 75; Lightfoot 2021, Cat. No. 419; Shier 1978, Cat. No. 65; Szentléleky 1969, Cat. No. 37; also *inter alia* Bailey 1988, Cat. Nos. Q 2087–2089; Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. Nos. 72–74; Młynarczyk 1997, Figs. 177–178; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXI, nos. U 40–42, U 44; Svobodová 2006, Cat. Nos. 190–191

Publication: unpublished

The piece represents a common morphological type amongst the Egyptian Hellenistic lamp forms surviving into the Roman period.³⁰ The shoulder of the lamp was filled up with segmented radial motif which represents the most common kind of decoration of this type of lamps,³¹ a distinguishing characteristic of Młynarczyk's subtype R.a.³² The nozzle is decorated with two more radial segments squeezed between the volutes on its sides. The circular base and the edges of the bottom of the lamp are rendered in simple incised lines. Considering all the individual parts of the present lamp's design as well as their particular rendering, it finds near perfect parallels in lamp from Karanis (Kom Aushim) in Fayum³³ and an unprovenanced lamp kept by the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest.³⁴ Both lamps are marked on the base with a simple mark possibly representing *lambda*, or, as suggested by Shier,³⁵ *alpha*. A similar mark is barely recognisable on the base of the present piece. Given some details, the three lamps were likely not formed in a single two-piece mould, but their very close relation is certain.

The only provenanced piece amongst the three near-identical specimens points to Fayum as their place of origin. This is further supported by the prevailing Fayumite provenance also of other similar lamps.³⁶ This is not surprising as Fayum was apparently a leading production centre for these lamps.³⁷ The date range of this type of lamps spans from the late 1st century BCE to 2nd century CE or possibly even later.³⁸

²⁸ Cf. Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. No. 50; Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 75; Shier 1978, Cat. No. 65.

²⁹ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 99–100, Tab. 2; see also *inter alia* Chrzanovski 2019, pp. 513–517.

³⁰ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, pp. 225–226; Chrzanovski 2019, pp. 513–517; Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 96–100, esp. 99–100; Shier 1978, pp. 22–23.

³¹ e.g. Młynarczyk 1997, p. 96; Shier 1978, p. 23.

³² Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 96–97.

³³ Shier 1978, Cat. No. 65.

³⁴ Szentléleky 1969, Cat. No. 37.

³⁵ Shier 1978, p. 67; cf. also Chrzanovski 2019, p. 514.

³⁶ Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. No. 50; Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 75; but cf. also Bailey 1988, Cat. No. Q 2088 possibly recovered from the Delta.

³⁷ e.g. Bailey 1988, p. 226; Młynarczyk 1997, p. 99.

³⁸ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 99–100, Tab. 2; See also Chrzanovski 2019, pp. 513–514.

Inv. No. P 5910 [Pl. 4]

Measurements: l. 79 mm, w. 58 mm, h. 23 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: reddish brown (5YR 5/3); mould-made; lightly slipped, reddish brown (2.5YR 5/4)

State of preservation: complete; heavily worn on the bottom

Burning marks: none

Origin: Alexandria, Lower Egypt, or Middle Egypt, probably Fayum³⁹

Date: late 1st century BCE – 2nd century CE⁴⁰

Comparanda: esp. Bailey 1988, Cat. No. Q 2089; Młynarczyk 1997, Fig. 179; also Młynarczyk 1997, Fig. 180; Bailey 1988, Cat. No. Q 2091

Publication: unpublished

The lamp represents a rather rare variant of a Hellenistic morphological type surviving into the Roman period, classified by Młynarczyk as her subtype R.b.⁴¹ They were distinguished from more common specimens of the same type, as represented by Inv. No. P 5909 [Pl. 3] from the present collection, by the decoration of their shoulder consisting of three radially placed palm leaf (herring bone,⁴² chevron⁴³) patterns. It is not clear if a protrusion found at the top end of one of the palm leaves could represent a deliberately moulded knob.⁴⁴ The decorative design on the nozzle of the present piece corresponds closely to what appears on the morphologically close lamps mentioned above, further corroborating their mutual origin.

Lamps of the present variant seem to be mostly traceable to Alexandria.⁴⁵ However, by its form, fabric, and decoration of the nozzle, the present lamp seems more comparable to the above-mentioned Inv. No. P 5909 which certainly came from Fayum. Thus, the present piece also likely came from there. The production of the morphological type of lamps amongst which the present specimen belongs has been dated between the late 1st century BCE and 2nd century CE with possible occasional appearance even later.⁴⁶ In particular, Młynarczyk suggests a very late 1st century BCE – 1st half of the 1st century CE date for one of the specimens of the subtype R.b, which was on the pottery context in which it was found at Alexandrian site of Kom el-Dikka.⁴⁷

³⁹ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 99–100; cf. Inv. No. P 5909; also Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. No. 50; Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. No. 75; Shier 1978, Cat. No. 65.

⁴⁰ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 99–100, Tab. 2.

⁴¹ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 96–98.

⁴² Młynarczyk 1997, p. 97.

⁴³ Bailey 1988, p. 254, Cat. No. Q 2089.

⁴⁴ Cf. Młynarczyk 1997, Fig. 179.

⁴⁵ See esp. Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 97–99.

⁴⁶ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 99–100, Tab. 2; See also Chrzanowski 2019, pp. 513–514.

⁴⁷ Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 100, 123.

Inv. No. 5914 [Pl. 5]

Measurements: l. 83 mm, w. 48 mm, h. 21 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: light red (2.5YR 6/6); mouldmade; slipped, reddish brown (5YR 4/3)

State of preservation: complete; slightly worn

Burning marks: on top and sides of one of the nozzles around the wick hole and on the adjoining part of the body

Origin: Egypt, probably Middle Egypt

Date: 2nd century CE⁴⁸

Comparanda: esp. Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. Nos. 19–20; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 331–332, also *inter alia* Bailey 1988, Cat. Nos. Q 1917–1922; Petrie 1905, Pls. LIV–LV; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 333–338

Publication: unpublished

The lamp falls under the ‘Type D’ of Bailey.⁴⁹ Such lamps are also called ‘delta lamps’⁵⁰ based on the triangular shape of the reflector they have usually attached on top of their handles. Based on Roman Italian models, such lamps were produced in various reaches of the Roman Empire including Egypt. They could be quite elaborate with figural and other complex motifs featured especially on the discus and on the reflector.⁵¹ The present lamp belonged to a variant decorated only by simple geometric ornamentation, representing a degraded egg and dart pattern, which was also smaller than the usual specimens.⁵² Notably, the nozzle is also shorter and is missing the typical volutes on its sides. By this they come close to the generally later lamps of Bailey’s ‘Type O’.⁵³ The present piece is very close to two lamps that reportedly came from Memphis and are kept in the Tūhura Otago Museum in Dunedin⁵⁴ and two others that came from Karanis.⁵⁵ One of the latter is near-identical, comparable in also in additional details such as the raised circle concentric with the wick-hole inside the discus.⁵⁶

Besides missing the triangular reflector, also other simple small lamps from Karanis⁵⁷ are highly comparable to the present piece. While the production of ‘Type D’ in Egypt was widespread and even such simple pieces could be considerably mobile, their distribution pattern seems to suggest that the general area of Middle Egypt including Fayum as their region of origin. The present lamp should be most likely dated to the 2nd century CE.⁵⁸

⁴⁸ Esp. Shier 1978, p. 34; see also Bailey 1988, 218–219; Chrzanovski 2019, p. 498.

⁴⁹ Bailey 1980, pp. 199–222.

⁵⁰ Petrie 1905, p. 7.

⁵¹ Cf. e.g. Bailey 1988, Cat. Nos. Q 1917–1947.

⁵² Shier 1978, p. 34.

⁵³ Bailey 1980, pp. 293–313.

⁵⁴ Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. Nos. 19–20.

⁵⁵ Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 331–332.

⁵⁶ Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 332. The detail is specifically noted by the author as distinguishing feature of the piece, *ibid.*, p. 120.

⁵⁷ Esp. Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 333–334.

⁵⁸ Esp. Shier 1978, p. 34; see also Bailey 1988, pp. 218–219; Chrzanovski 2019, p. 498.

Inv. No. P 5911 [Pl. 6]

Measurements: l. 74 mm, w. 60 mm, h. 27 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: red (2.5YR 5/6); mouldmade; lightly slipped, reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4)

State of preservation: complete; heavily worn on the bottom

Burning marks: none

Origin: Egypt, possibly Middle Egypt⁵⁹

Date: late 1st century BCE – 4th century CE⁶⁰

Comparanda: esp. Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. No. 53; Bailey 2001, Cat. No. 14; Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. No. 113; Młynarczyk 1997, Fig. 182; also *inter alia* Bailey 1988, Cat. Nos. Q 2100–2122; Bailey 2001, Cat. Nos. 10–11, 13; Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. Nos. 110–112; Kulichová 1982, Cat. No. 5; Młynarczyk 1997, Figs. 183–185; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIV

Publication: Kulichová 1982, Cat. No. 2

Recognition of some of the details of this lamp's design are to a certain degree hindered by the damage it sustained, especially on the bottom, and as it was formed in a mould which had apparently been already considerably worn. Pieces like this one are usually included in the wide and heterogeneous typically Egyptian class of the so-called 'frog lamps'. Morphologically the present piece represents their widely spread type evolving from the earlier Hellenistic models.⁶¹ Its particular subtype, classified by Młynarczyk as S.a, is characterised especially by its splayed nozzle ending.⁶² The most common kind of decoration appearing on such lamps consisted of a particular more or less stylised zoomorphic-floral decorative scheme, often dubbed 'monkey-in-a-palm-tree'.⁶³ The design found on the present lamp also represents an iteration of this motif. The hind legs of the animal are clearly visible. What is depicted on the sides of the filling hole is less clear, but it appears to be a simplified floral pattern, rather than the animal's forelegs. What remains from the decoration of the nozzle seems to represent the ladder/palm leaf pattern commonly appearing on this kind of lamps. The base of lamp is equipped with a damaged mark in the form of a Greek letter *delta*.

Occasionally appearing also on other Egyptian lamps, Młynarczyk suggests a possibility of the *delta* marks, and other abbreviations of the signature 'ΔIOC', to be traced to Fayum.⁶⁴ A *delta* mark appears also on comparable vessel in the Forcart collection assembled from the same region.⁶⁵ Another 'monkey-in-a-palm-tree' lamp with a *delta* mark comes from Herakleopolis (Ihnasya el-Medina).⁶⁶ Its *delta* mark and a few others recovered from lamps discovered at this site depict the Greek letter with its side bars elongated beyond the top intersection.⁶⁷ While the particular rendering of the present piece's mark is not entirely clear due to its damage, it seems to have resembled the Herakleopolis specimens. Consequently, it seems possible that

⁵⁹ See Młynarczyk 1997, p. 99, cf. Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. No. 113; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIV, no. E 13, Pl. LXXIII, nos. 138, 140–141.

⁶⁰ See esp. Bailey 2007, pp. 215–216; Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 103–104, Tab. 2; see also Knowles 2006, p. 323; *contra* Chrzanowski 2019, p. 533, see also p. 535.

⁶¹ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, pp. 226–227; Bailey 2007, esp. pp. 215–221; Chrzanowski 2019, *passim*, esp. pp. 533–534; Knowles 2006, pp. 322–337; Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 100–104.

⁶² Esp. Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 100–101; Chrzanowski 2019, pp. 533–535.

⁶³ After Bailey 1988, p. 227; see also Chrzanowski 2019, p. 533.

⁶⁴ Młynarczyk 1997, p. 99

⁶⁵ Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. No. 113; for the provenance in general see *ibid.* pp. 470–471.

⁶⁶ Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIV, no. E 13.

⁶⁷ Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIV, no. E 13, Pl. LXXIII, nos. 138, 140–141.

the present lamp could originally come from the Middle Egypt including Fayum. The dating of the ‘monkey-in-a-palm-tree’ and other ‘frog lamps’ morphologically based on Hellenistic models has been a topic of long-standing debate. Some scholars, encouraged in particular by the well-stratified finds from the Eastern Desert,⁶⁸ argue for an early dating reaching to the beginning of the Roman period.⁶⁹ A contesting argument sees them as much later, falling into the 3rd–4th centuries CE.⁷⁰ While the former argument seems more plausible, a wide dating range for the present lamp encompassing both options should be retained for the time being.

Inv. No. P 5915 [Pl. 7]

Measurements: l. 84 mm, w. 71 mm, h. 33 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: pale brown (10YR 6/3); mouldmade; unslipped

State of preservation: complete

Burning marks: on top of the nozzle around the wick hole and on the adjoining parts of the body

Origin: Middle Egypt⁷¹

Date: 2nd–4th century CE⁷²

Comparanda: esp. Petrie 1905, Pl. LXVII, no. B 48; also *inter alia* Bailey 1988, Cat. No. Q 2097; Bussière and Lindros Wohl 2017, Cat. No. 508; Petrie 1905, Pls. LXIII–LXVII; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 97, 106

Publication: Kulichová 1982, Cat. No. 20

By its form as well as decoration, the lamp clearly stems from the tradition of the typically Egyptian ‘frog lamps’. Consisting of simple lines and several dots, the design on the shoulder and nozzle represents a heavily simplified version of the usual zoomorphic(-floral) decorative scheme.⁷³ A specimen recovered by Petrie from Herakleopolis (Ihnasya el-Medina)⁷⁴ is a near perfect parallel to the present piece. The main difference is in the marks appearing on the bottoms of both lamps, another fairly common feature of ‘frog lamps’. The Herakleopolis specimen was marked with a palm branch, which often appeared on Egyptian lamps in general.⁷⁵ The present piece was equipped with a disintegrated Greek letter *alpha*, such as were typical for ‘frog lamps’ in particular,⁷⁶ including the assemblage from Herakleopolis.⁷⁷ Although clearly not coming from the same two-piece mould, a very close relation of the two lamps is certain.

Considering the relatively high mobility of even rougher variants of lamps in Egypt,⁷⁸ we must refrain from concluding that Herakleopolis was the place of manufacture of the present lamp, as it was actually not necessarily even of its local near-twin. However, the Middle-Egyptian provenance of both seems nearly certain.⁷⁹ Egyptian ‘frog lamps’ have been traditionally, and with

⁶⁸ Esp. Knowles 2006, pp. 322–337.

⁶⁹ See esp. Bailey 2007, pp. 215–216; Młynarczyk 1997, pp. 103–104, Tab. 2; see also Knowles 2006, p. 323.

⁷⁰ Chrzanowski 2019, p. 533, see also p. 535.

⁷¹ Compare esp. Petrie 1905, Pl. LVII, no. B 48; see also e.g. Bailey 1988, p. 227.

⁷² Bussière and Lindros Wohl 2017, p. 366; see also *inter alia* Bailey 1988, pp. 227–228; Chrzanowski 2019, pp. 517–519; Knowles 2006, *passim*, esp. p. 338.

⁷³ Cf. e.g. Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIII, Nos. F 40–41 with similarly reductive but still well-recognisable iconography.

⁷⁴ Petrie 1905, Pl. LXVII, no. B 48.

⁷⁵ e.g. Bailey 1988, pp. 114–115.

⁷⁶ e.g. Bailey 1988, pp. 105–106, Fig. 135.

⁷⁷ See Petrie 1905, Pls. LXIII–LXVII, LXXII, esp. nos. 46–90.

⁷⁸ See e.g. Knowles 2006, pp. 313–314; in particular Bussière and Lindros Wohl 2017, Cat. No. 508.

⁷⁹ See also e.g. Bailey 1988, p. 227.

persisting uncertainty, dated to 3rd–4th century CE or a little earlier, while notoriously also resisting any attempts at periodisation of individual types belonging to the group.⁸⁰ More recently, excavations in the Egyptian Eastern Desert have proved that ‘frog lamps’ were well established as early as the beginning of the 2nd century CE,⁸¹ notably including pieces with the original zoomorphic/floral motifs already simplified and disintegrated almost beyond recognition.⁸²

Inv. No. P 5907 [Pl. 8]

Measurements: l. 149 mm, w. 117 mm, h. 71 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: pale brown (10YR 6/3); mouldmade; unslipped

State of preservation: complete; slightly worn, especially on the bottom

Burning marks: none

Origin: Middle Egypt⁸³

Date: 3rd–4th century CE⁸⁴

Comparanda: esp. Bailey 1988, Cat. No. Q 2133; Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 129; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIII, F 55, F 56, F 76; Pl. LXIXA, no. F 57; Shier 1978, Cat. No. 246; also *inter alia* Bailey 1988, Cat. Nos. 2128–2132, 2134; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIII; Robins 1939a, Cat. Nos. 14–15; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 215–216; 239–245, 247–248, 250

Publication: Kulichová 1982, Cat. No. 11

Belonging to the typically Egyptian class of ‘frog lamps’, the present large piece, unlike most others, depicted an amphibian, perhaps to be more fittingly labelled as a toad, as a complete and realistically depicted animal. It was rendered in very high relief further underscoring its realistic impression. On its back, there was a simple discus with a filling hole and bulging edges. Otherwise, the lamp has a simple shape, the division between the body and the nozzle is indicated only through the presence of two incised lines, a wavy one and a curved one. While obscured by its state of preservation, the bottom of the lamp could have been equipped with a mark. Two mutually perpendicular straight lines seem to be faintly discernible on it, one horizontal and one vertical, which could correspond to some of the designs commonly appearing as marks on other specimens of this particular variant of ‘frog lamps’.⁸⁵

Pieces that are well comparable to the present lamp came mainly from the Middle Egypt including Fayum.⁸⁶ There lamps with realistically depicted frogs/toads seem to be relatively well represented in general.⁸⁷ The Middle Egyptian origin of the present specimen seems to be further supported by the apparent marly character of its fabric typical for the region. Lamps of this kind are conventionally dated to 3rd–4th centuries CE. Perhaps, a possibility that they were slightly earlier should be considered as well.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Bussière and Lindros Wohl 2017, p. 366; Bailey 1988, pp. 227–228; see also *inter alia* Chrzanovski 2019, pp. 517–519.

⁸¹ Knowles 2006, *passim*, esp. p. 338; see also Bussière and Lindros Wohl 2017, p. 366; Chrzanovski 2019, pp. 517–519.

⁸² Cf. the stylistic chronological progression cautiously proposed by Bailey 1988, p. 228.

⁸³ Compare esp. Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 129; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIII, Pl. LXIXA, nos. F 57; Shier 1978, Pls. 27, 29–30.

⁸⁴ Bailey 1988, pp. 227, 258–259; Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 129; Shier 1978, pp. 96, 101–102; but see also Shier 1978, p. 101, Cat. No. 239.

⁸⁵ See *inter alia* Petrie 1905; Pl. LXIII, nos. F 80, F 90; Shier, 1978, Cat. Nos. 242–243, 248, 250.

⁸⁶ Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 129; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIII, Pl. LXIXA, nos. F 57; Shier 1978, Pls. 27, 29–30.

⁸⁷ See esp. Petrie 1905; Shier 1978.

⁸⁸ Shier 1978, p. 101, Cat. No. 239.

Inv. No. P 5917 [Pl. 9]

Measurements: l. 99 mm, w. 72 mm, h. 25 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: dark greyish brown (10YR 4/2); mouldmade; unslipped

State of preservation: incomplete, loop handle and part of the nozzle missing, part of the shoulder chipped off; worn

Burning marks: on top and underside of the nozzle around the wick hole and on the adjoining part of the body; on the base

Origin: Egypt, probably Lower Egypt⁸⁹

Date: 6th–early 7th century CE⁹⁰

Comparanda: esp. Bailey *et al.* 1996, Cat. No. Q 2202bis; Menzel 1969, Abb. 82, no. 11, Cat. No. 571; also *inter alia* Chrzanowski 2013, Cat. No. N.12; Karivieri 2003, Cat. No. 709

Publication: unpublished

The piece belongs to a specific type of Coptic lamps, the so-called ‘Abu Mena 2’.⁹¹ There are several specimens of this type which also share the same iconographic motif depicted in the discus with the present piece.⁹² In the arrangement of the composition, even in its details, the present piece is very close to the lamp kept at the British Museum in London.⁹³ The execution on the present piece is clearly cruder suggesting a relation of a model and a less-competently made copy. On neither of the pieces the depicted scene is completely clear. It consists of two naked⁹⁴ males, most likely beardless youths, with either wreath or curly hair depicted on their heads. They face each other and in between them above the filling hole they hold, each by one hand, a basket (*kalathos* or rather *qualus*⁹⁵) with fruits, apparently grapes. Both of them hold another bunch of grapes in their spare hands behind their backs. What is likely a *bucranium* is hanging below the filling hole with another device hanging underneath. The proposed interpretations of the motif widely differ. Bailey unsurely suggested the scene to depict two satyrs.⁹⁶ Moberg⁹⁷ and later Chrzanowski⁹⁸ suggested to identify it with the conclusion of the Old Testament episode in which Moses sent out representatives of the Israelites to explore the land of Canaan who then returned bearing a heavy bunch of grapes carried on a pole and other fruits.⁹⁹ Moberg’s suggestion seems to have been at least partly based on her misinterpretation of what was actually depicted in the scene.¹⁰⁰ It appears more likely, in accordance with Bailey’s notion, that the depiction indeed stemmed from the pagan Graeco-Roman iconographic tradition. In particular, it could be readily recognised as belonging to the repertoire of Dionysiac subjects, a wide variety of which was very popular not only in Roman Egypt. Nonetheless, in the context,

⁸⁹ Chrzanowski 2013, p. 182; cf. also Bailey *et al.* 1996, p. 133.

⁹⁰ Chrzanowski 2013, p. 182.

⁹¹ e.g. Chrzanowski 2013, p. 182

⁹² Bailey *et al.* 1996, Cat. No. Q 2202bis; Chrzanowski 2013, Cat. No. N.12; Karivieri 2003, Cat. No. 709.

⁹³ Bailey *et al.* 1996, Cat. No. Q 2202bis.

⁹⁴ But cf. Karivieri 2003, p. 116.

⁹⁵ e.g. White 1975, pp. 59–61.

⁹⁶ Bailey *et al.* 1996, p. 133.

⁹⁷ As directly cited by Karivieri 2003, p. 116; see also *ibid.*, p. 117, footnote no. 1.

⁹⁸ Chrzanowski 2013, p. 199.

⁹⁹ *Testamentum Vetus, Numeri* 13, in particular 23.

¹⁰⁰ The motif of two Israelites carrying a large bunch of grapes on a pole indeed appears on lamps, but it seems only superficially comparable to the composition appearing on the present and similar pieces. Cf. e.g. Menzel 1969, Abb. 77, no. 2, Cat. No. 597.

in which it is found on the present lamp, such a motif must be indisputably interpreted within the boundaries of Christian thought, namely as likely expressing the hope for resurrection and salvation in paradise. In this way many more Dionysiac as well as other Pre-Christian subjects were adopted into the Coptic iconographic repertoire.¹⁰¹

As suggested by the label itself, the main production site of the lamps of the type 'Abu Mena 2' has been identified at the monastery site of Abu Mena near Alexandria. However, they were produced in lesser numbers elsewhere in Egypt as well.¹⁰² One of the closest parallels to the present piece from the British Museum has been found at and tentatively proposed to come from the eponymous site.¹⁰³ Such lamps are relatively firmly dated to the 6th century CE, while possibly remaining in production until the early 7th century CE.

Inv. No. P 5920 [Pl. 10]

Measurements: l. 114 mm, w. 70 mm, h. 30 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: pink (5YR 7/3); mouldmade; slipped, reddish brown (2.5YR 5/4)

State of preservation: incomplete, part of the nozzle missing

Burning marks: on the edges left by breaking off the part of the nozzle

Origin: Egypt, possibly Middle Egypt¹⁰⁴

Date: 6–7th century CE¹⁰⁵

Comparanda: esp. Petrie 1905, Pl. LXII, Nos. G 83, G 85; also *inter alia* Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 138; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 430–431; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXII; Robins 1939a, Cat. No. 18

Publication: unpublished

The lamp belongs to the diverse class of elongated lamps characteristic of Coptic production.¹⁰⁶ The present lamp is characterised by a combination of a plain discus around the filling hole bordered by a raised ring surrounded by a nozzle channel running all the way to the wick hole. The piece is equipped with a loop handle. Only the simplest decoration consisting of short raised lines radiating from the outer edge of the groove.

Elongated lamps were widely spread across the whole late ancient Egypt and beyond. However, some of the closest¹⁰⁷ as well as other similar specimens¹⁰⁸ to the present lamp came from Middle Egypt including Fayum. Elongated lamps are conventionally dated to the 6–7th centuries CE.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ See e.g. Atiya (ed.) 1991, s.v. Mythological subjects in Coptic art, esp. Mythological subjects in Coptic art: Dionysus.

¹⁰² Chrzanovski 2013, p. 182.

¹⁰³ Bailey et al. 1996, p. 133.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Petrie 1905, Pl. LXII, esp. Nos. G 83, G 85.

¹⁰⁵ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, pp. 230–232; Chrzanovski 2013, pp. 183–186; Robins 1939a, p. 51; but cf. Shier 1978, pp. 47–48.

¹⁰⁶ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, pp. 230–232; Chrzanovski 2013, pp. 183–186; Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2019, p. 567; Shier 1978, pp. 47–48.

¹⁰⁷ Petrie 1905, Pl. LXII, Nos. G 83, G 85.

¹⁰⁸ Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 138; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXII; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 430–431.

¹⁰⁹ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, pp. 230–232; Chrzanovski 2013, pp. 183–186; Robins 1939a, p. 51; but cf. Shier 1978, pp. 47–48.

Inv. No. P 5919 [Pl. 11]

Measurements: l. 105 mm, w. 62 mm, h. 26 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: pale brown (10YR 6/3); mouldmade; unslipped

State of preservation: incomplete, loop handle missing; slightly worn

Burning marks: on top and underside of the nozzle on the edge of the wick hole; much lighter sooting also on the adjoining parts of the nozzle and body

Origin: Middle Egypt¹¹⁰

Date: 6–7th century CE¹¹¹

Comparanda: esp. Hölscher 1954, Fig. 94, c; Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2019, Cat. No. 17; Anson and Hannah 1999, Cat. No. 77; also *inter alia* Bailey 1988, Cat. Nos. 2254–2259; Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. Nos. 19–21; Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2019, Cat. No. 16; Petrie 1905, Pl. LXII

Publication: unpublished

The present lamp belongs amongst the so-called elongated lamps¹¹² typical of Coptic production.¹¹³ Besides other even figural motifs,¹¹⁴ such lamps were often decorated by compositions consisting of serrated lines, often labelled also as ‘branch patterns,’¹¹⁵ which were distinctive for them. On the present lamp, serrated lines appear exclusively as the filling of its discus elongated into a nozzle channel running all the way to the wick hole. The lines radiate from the axis of the lamp, which is however not accentuated in any way. They do not form any recognisable complex pattern, such as for example cross.¹¹⁶

The present piece fits well with the elongated lamps such as were produced mainly in Middle Egypt.¹¹⁷ These lamps are dated to the 6–7th centuries CE, spanning the concluding phase of the Roman/Byzantine rule over Egypt until the initial decades after the Arab conquest of 641 CE.¹¹⁸

Inv. No. P 5918 [Pl. 12]

Measurements: l. 96 mm, w. 66 mm, h. 31 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: pink (7.5YR 7/3); mouldmade; unslipped

State of preservation: incomplete, part of the nozzle missing

Burning marks: on top and underside of the nozzle on the edge of the wick hole

Origin: Egypt or Syria-Palestine, probably Egypt, possibly Fustat¹¹⁹

Date: 9–10th century CE¹²⁰

Comparanda: esp. Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. No. 145; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. C.1373-1921;¹²¹ *inter alia* also Lane 1939, Fig. 6, A; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Inv. No. AO

¹¹⁰ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, p. 232; Chrzanowski 2013, p. 184.

¹¹¹ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, p. 232; Chrzanowski 2013, p. 184; Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2019, p. 567, Tab. 3, Fig. 5.

¹¹² e.g. Chrzanowski 2013, p. 183–186; Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2019, p. 567.

¹¹³ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, pp. 230–232; Chrzanowski 2013, pp. 183–186; Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2019, p. 567; Shier 1978, pp. 47–48.

¹¹⁴ e.g. Bailey 1988, Cat. No. 2259.

¹¹⁵ e.g. Anson and Hannah 1999, p. 145; Bailey 1988, p. 232.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Hölscher 1954, Fig. 94, c.

¹¹⁷ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, p. 232; Chrzanowski 2013, p. 184.

¹¹⁸ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, p. 232; Chrzanowski 2013, p. 184; Pawlikowska-Gwiazda 2019, p. 567, Tab. 3, Fig. 5.

¹¹⁹ e.g. Chrzanowski 2013, p. 187; Kubiak 1970, pp. 3–4; in particular cf. e.g. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. C.1373-1921, see Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O346245/lamp-unknown/>.

¹²⁰ *Inter alia* Chrzanowski 2019, p. 549; Kubiak 1970, p. 3.

¹²¹ Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O346245/lamp-unknown/>.

24533;¹²² Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. C.1372-1921¹²³

Publication: unpublished

The present piece belongs amongst the almond-shaped¹²⁴ 'slipper lamps'.¹²⁵ Such lamps were often produced with green(/yellow) lead glazed surface¹²⁶ and were popular in Egypt both in the late ancient and early medieval periods.¹²⁷ Floral patterns were quite usual on these lamps, often combined with geometric or even zoomorphic motifs, such as birds.¹²⁸ It seems possible that birds were depicted also on the present piece on both sides of the nozzle. However, this part of the lamp's decoration is obscured by the damage it sustained.¹²⁹

Although the form, and likely also the decoration,¹³⁰ of the present lamp were of Near-Eastern origin, both were ultimately adopted also by Egyptian lamp-makers.¹³¹ Many such lamps including one of its closest parallels Victoria and Albert Museum in London¹³² are provenanced to the old Muslim capital of Fustat. For many of them, it could have been also their actual place of origin.¹³³ The present lamp is most likely dated to the 9–10th century CE.¹³⁴ This is supported by the dating proposed for one its closest parallels from the Forcart collection¹³⁵ as well as the more firmly established dating of two morphologically very similar pieces from the present collection, namely Inv. Nos. P 5912 [Pl. 13] and P 5913 [Pl. 14].

Inv. No. P 5912 [Pl. 13]

Measurements: l. 86, w. 70, h. 34

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: light grey (2.5Y 7/2); mouldmade; unslipped

State of preservation: incomplete, part of the nozzle and vertical lug handle missing; worn

Burning marks: none

Origin: Egypt or Syria-Palestine, probably Egypt, possibly Fustat¹³⁶

Date: 9–10th century CE¹³⁷

Comparanda: esp. Kubiak 1970, Text Fig. 1; also *inter alia* Bahgat and Massoul 1930, Pl. LVI, no. 2; Chrzanovski 2013, Cat. No. 38; Sardi 2011, Cat. No. 217; Svobodová 2006, Cat. No. 221

Publication: unpublished

¹²² Louvre, *undated*, available at: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010149407>.

¹²³ Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O346246/lamp-unknown/>.

¹²⁴ Cf. e.g. Kubiak 1970, p. 3.

¹²⁵ See e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, *passim*.

¹²⁶ e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; Kubiak 1970, pp. 3–4; more in general see e.g. Lane 1939.

¹²⁷ e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, pp. 186–187.

¹²⁸ e.g. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. C.1373-1921, see Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O346245/lamp-unknown/>.

¹²⁹ Cf. Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 145.

¹³⁰ See e.g. Chrzanovski 2019, p. 549.

¹³¹ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, p. 232; Chrzanovski 2013, pp. 180, 186–187; Chrzanovski 2019, p. 549; Kubiak 1970, 3–4.

¹³² Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. C.1373-1921, see Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O346245/lamp-unknown/>.

¹³³ But note that the abovementioned closest parallel has been suggested to come from Syria, see Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O346245/lamp-unknown/>.

¹³⁴ *Inter alia* Chrzanovski 2019, p. 549; Kubiak 1970, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Chrzanovski 2019, Cat. No. 145.

¹³⁶ Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; see also Kubiak 1970, pp. 3–4; Sardi 2011, pp. 303–304.

¹³⁷ Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; see also Kubiak 1970, pp. 2–4; Sardi 2011, p. 304.

The piece represents the popular late ancient to early medieval class of almond-shaped¹³⁸ 'slipper lamps'.¹³⁹ Such lamps were being produced both with plain surfaces, as was the present piece, and later covered with green(/yellow) lead glaze,¹⁴⁰ as represented by Inv. No. P 5913 [Pl. 14] from the present collection. The present lamp features a characteristic design on its shoulder consisting of floral/geometric motifs organised to form roughly heart-shaped patterns. Also labelled as of the 'Samarra style',¹⁴¹ such decoration had its roots in the Near-Eastern artistic repertoire of the Abbasid times.¹⁴²

Both the form and the decoration of the present lamp were ultimately based on the Near-Eastern models. However, both were in time adopted by the Egyptian lamp-makers as well.¹⁴³ In Egypt, such lamps are regularly being associated with the early Muslim capital of Fustat.¹⁴⁴ This is from where also the closest parallel to the present piece was in fact recovered.¹⁴⁵ Although with due caution, it seems possible that the present piece originally came from this site. In particular, lamps of this variant are dated to 9th–10th centuries CE.¹⁴⁶

Inv. No. P 5913 [Pl. 14]

Measurements: l. 91 mm, w. 73 mm, h. 32 mm

Fabric, technique of manufacture, and surface treatment: brown (7.5YR 5/3); mouldmade; glazed, dark greyish green (5GY 4/2)

State of preservation: partial, front part of the body and most of the vertical lug handle missing, part of the shoulder chipped off; part of the body chipped off; worn, especially on the bottom

Burning marks: none

Origin: Egypt or Syria-Palestine, probably Egypt, possibly Fustat¹⁴⁷

Date: 9–10th century CE¹⁴⁸

Comparanda: esp. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. 1732-1897;¹⁴⁹ *inter alia* also Chrzanovski 2013, Cat. No. 38; Lane 1939, Fig. 6, B; Sardi 2011, Cat. No. 217

Publication: unpublished

The piece is an almond-shaped¹⁵⁰ 'slipper lamp',¹⁵¹ a class popular from late ancient to early medieval times. While also regularly left with plain surface, as represented by Inv. Nos. P 5918 [Pl. 12] and P 5912 [Pl. 13] from the present collection, such lamps could be also made more attractive through the application of with green(/yellow) lead glaze,¹⁵² including the present piece.

¹³⁸ Cf. e.g. Kubiak 1970, p. 3.

¹³⁹ See e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, *passim*.

¹⁴⁰ e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; Kubiak 1970, pp. 3–4; more in general see e.g. Lane 1939.

¹⁴¹ e.g. Kubiak 1970, p. 4.

¹⁴² *Inter alia* Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; Kubiak 1970, p. 4; Sardi 2011, p. 304.

¹⁴³ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, p. 232; Chrzanovski 2013, pp. 180, 186–187; Chrzanovski 2019, p. 549; Kubiak 1970, p. 4; Sardi 2011, p. 304.

¹⁴⁴ e.g. Bahgat and Massoul 1930, p. 88; Sardi 2011, 304.

¹⁴⁵ Kubiak 1970, Text Fig. 1.

¹⁴⁶ Chrzanovski 2013, pp. 180, 187; see also Kubiak 1970, pp. 2–4; Sardi 2011, p. 304.

¹⁴⁷ e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; Kubiak 1970, pp. 3–4; in particular cf. e.g. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Acc. No. 1732-1897, see Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O199530/lamp-unknown/>.

¹⁴⁸ Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; Chrzanovski 2019, p. 549; Kubiak 1970, p. 3; see also Lane 1939, pp. 56–57.

¹⁴⁹ Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O199530/lamp-unknown/>.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. e.g. Kubiak 1970, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ See e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, *passim*.

¹⁵² e.g. Chrzanovski 2013, p. 187; Kubiak 1970, pp. 3–4; more in general see e.g. Lane 1939.

While originating from the Near-East, the ‘slipper lamps’ were also readily taken over into the repertoire of Egyptian lamp-makers.¹⁵³ Many such lamps came especially from the early Muslim capital of Fustat.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, a glazed ‘slipper lamp’ with similarly designed layout of the decoration kept by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London reportedly came from the site.¹⁵⁵ The appearance of green(/yellow) lead-glazed lamps in Egypt has been tentatively suggested to fall to the late 9–10th centuries CE¹⁵⁶ as well as the morphological variant the present lamp belongs to.¹⁵⁷ Such dating of the present piece is further supported also by the closeness of its shape to other lamps dated to the same period based on their iconography,¹⁵⁸ as represented by Inv. No. 5912.

Discussion and conclusions

Based on its owners’ biographies, it can be presumed that the Hellmuth collection was assembled in late 1940s most likely from source(s) in and/or around Cairo. Beyond that, the evaluation of this set of pottery lamps as a whole must rely on the internal evidence of its objects as such. As shown, it included Hellenistic, Roman, Coptic, and Islamic lamps coming from the period of the late 2nd century BCE to the 10th century CE. With some gaps they illustrate well the range of pottery lamps used in Egypt during that time. Although generally comprising of specimens which may be considered as of lesser attractivity, rather than of a lesser attractiveness, the set demonstrates pottery lamps forms typical or even emblematic of the development of the lighting devices used in Egypt during the given timespan. Strikingly, the set bears a resemblance to the selection of typical Egyptian lamps from the collection and published by Frederick William Robins in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (1939).¹⁵⁹ The Robins’ representative set includes three direct close parallels to pieces from the Hellmuth collection, namely Inv. Nos. P 5909 [Pl. 3], P 5921 [Pl. 1], and P 5916 [Pl. 2], and more distant parallels for five more, namely Inv. Nos. P 5910 [Pl. 4], P 5911 [Pl. 6], P 5915 [Pl. 7], P 5907 [Pl. 8] and P 5920 [Pl. 10]. In his selection he intentionally avoided lamps closely modelled on Greek and Roman non-Egyptian models and lamps from after the Arab conquest of 641 CE.¹⁶⁰ Such lamps are represented in the Hellmuth collection by altogether six specimens, namely Inv. Nos. P 5914 [Pl. 5], P 5917 [Pl. 9], P 5919 [Pl. 11], P 5918 [Pl. 12], P 5912 [Pl. 13], and P 5913 [Pl. 14]. The chronologically later part of the Hellmuth pottery lamps, namely Inv. Nos. P 5917 [Pl. 9], P 5920 [Pl. 10], P 5919 [Pl. 11], P 5918 [Pl. 12], P 5912 [Pl. 13], and P 5913 [Pl. 14], seems also well comparable to for example the temporally corresponding part of the collection assembled by Maurice Bouvier at roughly

¹⁵³ *Inter alia* Bailey 1988, p. 232; Chrzanowski 2013, pp. 180, 186–187; Chrzanowski 2019, p. 549.

¹⁵⁴ e.g. Bahgat and Massoul 1930, p. 88; Sardi 2011, 304.

¹⁵⁵ Acc. No. 1732-1897, see Victoria and Albert Museum, 2025, available at: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O199530/lamp-unknown/>.

¹⁵⁶ Chrzanowski 2013, p. 187; Kubiak 1970, p. 3; see also Lane 1939, pp. 56–57.

¹⁵⁷ *Inter alia* Chrzanowski 2019, p. 549; Kubiak 1970, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Inter alia* Bahgat and Massoul 1930, Pl. LVI, no. 2; Kubiak 1970, Text Fig. 1.

¹⁵⁹ Robins 1939a. Nearly the same text and illustration were published also in his universal overview *The story of the lamp (and the candle)*, Robins 1939b, pp. 65–69, Pl. XIV. Throughout the present paper references to the dedicated study (Robins 1939a) are preferred. Although well outdated, Robins’ concise treatment of Egyptian pottery lamps has served as an influential contribution on the issue and remains quite often referenced also in relevant contemporary literature (e.g. Chrzanowski 2019; Knowles 2006; Młynarczyk 1997).

For Robins in general, who bequeathed parts of his extensive collection to the British Museum in London and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, see e.g. Bailey 1963–1964; Petch 2009.

¹⁶⁰ Robins 1939a, esp. p. 48.

the same time.¹⁶¹ Such similarities could reflect what kinds of lamps were generally available at the antiquities market at that time, moreover, possibly specifically in particular parts of the country, in extension, from which sites they could have been sourced. The latter is dealt with in detail below. While only hypothetical, it also remains an option that the collection was in fact in part directly inspired by the Robins selection, by that time well available to anyone interested.

While it was not possible to specify the archaeological provenance for most of the individual pieces of lamps from the Hellmuth collection as such, it may be far better narrowed down considering the entire set. For some of the pieces, their place of manufacture could be positively identified as in Middle Egypt including Fayum, namely Inv. Nos. P 5909 [Pl. 3], P 5915 [Pl. 7], P 5907 [Pl. 8] and P 5919 [Pl. 10]. More may have been made in the region as well, namely Inv. Nos. P 5921 [Pl. 1], P 5910 [Pl. 4], P 5914 [Pl. 5], P 5911 [Pl. 6], and P 5920 [Pl. 10]. Two others, namely Inv. Nos. P 5916 [Pl. 2], P 5917 [Pl. 9], probably originated from Lower Egypt. Nonetheless, lamps of these types have been recovered from Middle-Egyptian sites as well.¹⁶² The same could be stated of the typical early Islamic lamps,¹⁶³ while their main find source had apparently been Fustat. Indeed, it was noted that the lamps from the Hellmuth collection could be well-compared to specimens recovered at Herakleopolis (Ihnasya el-Medina)¹⁶⁴ and Karanis (Kom Aushim).¹⁶⁵ The whole Hellmuth collection needn't have come from a single site, but it seems likely that at least its major part was excavated somewhere in Middle Egypt including Fayum. While not necessarily, such core was probably supplemented by a few lamps found at Fustat and possibly another few coming from Lower Egypt including Alexandria and the closest desert regions.¹⁶⁶ Such archaeological provenances could very well be amongst the main sources of lamps for the antiquities market of Cairo

The Hellmuth set of pottery lamps from Egypt was apparently well curated, comprising of carefully and insightfully selected pieces, to illustrate the development of the lighting devices used in Egypt over the course of more than 1,000 years of its history. At the same time, it was made easily affordable for a buyer of moderate means. Considering also the place of residence of Hellmuths in Egypt, their collection was most likely acquired in Cairo while the ultimate place of recovery for most of their pieces is to be looked for in the Middle Egypt including Fayum.

¹⁶¹ Chrzanowski 2013; in particular *ibid.* pp. 178–179.

¹⁶² For Inv. No. P 5916 [Pl. 2] see e.g. Petrie 1905, Pl. LXIXA, no. V 6; Shier 1978, Cat. Nos. 21–30; for P 5917 [Pl. 9] see e.g. Petrie 1905, Pl. LXVIII, no. Z 30; Shier 1978, Cat. No. 406.

¹⁶³ See e.g. Chrzanowski 2019, Cat. No. 145.

¹⁶⁴ Petrie 1905.

¹⁶⁵ Shier 1978.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. e.g. the collection Bouvier, Chrzanowski 2013.

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Pl. 1



a



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Pl. 3



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Pl. 5



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Pl. 7



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Pl. 9



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Pl. 13



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