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INTRODUCTION

This catalogue of closed pottery oil lamps follows the previous volume of 'Saucer Lamps'¹ and contains mainly intact oil lamps discovered in excavations and listed with the Antiquities Authority up to the year 1988. The volume includes Archaic Greek and Hellenistic lamps made in Eastern Greece in the late 7th-5th centuries BCE; mainland Greece; Classical Greece of the 6th-4th centuries BCE; and lamps made after the conquest of the East by Alexander the Great (333-332 BCE) to the Roman conquest (1st century BCE-early 1st century CE), during which both civilizations - of the West and the East - merged into what is known as the Hellenistic period and the Hellenistic culture.

The origin of the idea of turning an everyday common vessel, the *bowl*, into a special vessel meant for lighting, the *lamp*, came from the East. It was done with minimum effort, just slightly pinching the bowl's rim which, with minimum changes, lasted from the late Chalcolithic period to the end of the first millennium BCE (this lamp form was made sporadically in later periods as well).

At the end of the Iron Age and during the Persian period, from the 7th century BCE, a new lamp production center came into existence in Eastern Greece (Anatolia, in Turkey), later expanding to mainland Greece. These new lamp production centers used a completely different technique in fashioning lamps. This revolution ended in a complete physical change of the lamp; instead of pinching at one point to create a wick rest, the new process bent the entire circumference of the bowl inward, ending in a closed vessel. The change was slow and gradual, lasting at least to the 5th century BCE. This 'closed' lamp also firmly stood the test of time while undergoing evolutionary changes of form.

This new lamp industry quickly supplanted the east from its hegemony in lamp production, capturing its markets and bringing it to an end. We suggest that even the small proportion of lamps imported during the Persian period in the 6th century BCE put pressure on local production; producers and consumers learned that new types of oil lamps, better and more efficient, were on their way. And indeed, these imported lamps gradually replaced the local industry; in the provincia Syria-Palestina, local lamps were almost entirely replaced by the new imported merchandise - unlike other pottery vessels that continued to be made locally with minor changes.

In the southern part of the Mediterranean, particularly North Africa,² the Punic oil lamp, made in the old pinching technique, remained popular. Combined with the new bending process, another version of a closed lamp emerged, lasting from the 4th-2nd centuries BCE.

They slightly resemble the local Hellenistic pinched lamp of the 3rd-1st centuries BCE.

We suggest several reasons for the closing of the lamps: preventing the precious combustible material, the oil, from spilling out; diminishing its size, making the lamp more transportable; and creating a better protected place for the wick. This technical change brought about the separation of the lamps into two parts, each having a function: an oil receptacle, with a wide opening through which oil was poured to fill it, and another smaller hole, pierced at the end of a protrusion for inserting the wick, called the *nozzle*. This idea had already been tried in the East in the Late Bronze/Iron I-II periods,³ and again in the Hellenistic period, by pinching an ordinary bowl.

The Greek way of closing the bowl was similar to lamps made in early-middle Minoan culture in Crete,⁴ which may have served as a prototype to the Greek industry. This was fashioned by using a small saucer or bowl. The bowl used in Greece was of an Attic-Black glazed ware, typical of Greek Classical pottery. Lamps produced in Athens and Corinth were made in known and dated workshops, and signed by the potters who made them.⁵ Imported lamps serve as important tools in the dating and chronology of lamps and other finds found outside Greece, including our own region (which we will call the Levant, enclosing The Holy land, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan). As yet, we are unable to determine the exact date of arrival of these products into the Levant. The lamps were part of the East Greek and later mainland Greek commerce along the Mediterranean coast, brought by new settlers or merchants who settled in Mesad Hashavyahu.⁶ (Figs.1-4) Their different shape and ware make them easy to identify, distinguishing them from local lamps; imitations were identified by their inferior quality, or the different clays from which the oil lamps were made. The number of imported oil lamps into the country prior to the Hellenistic period is rather small.

The early Greek lamp industry, and the later Hellenistic ones, lasted until replaced by the flourishing new Roman lamp industry in the second half of the 1st century BCE. The rival industry in Rome was taken over relatively quickly in the 2nd century CE by the Greeks, becoming once more a leading power owing to their creative ability. The lamps were as good as the originals made in Rome. The main workshops were in Corinth in the 2nd century CE, and later in Athens.

³ Sussman, 2007, lamps pp.1507-1581. Ohata, 1967, Zeror, Vol. II, Pls.X:9,10 and XXVIII; Yanai, 1995; Sussman, 2007, Fig.6.34 and note 1 above.

⁴ Person, 1942, Crete.

⁵ Howland, 1958, pp.3-4.

⁶ Naveh, 1962, Mesad Hashavyahu, pp.89-113, Fig.8:1-4.

¹ Sussman, 2007.

² Deneave J. D., 1969, Carthage, Pls. XVII-XII.