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A Roman Oil-lamp in the Mallawi Museum

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Abstract

There have been more than a thousand clay oil lamp fragments from the Greco-Roman period found all throughout Egypt. Among the many lamps discovered, a few rectangular clay oil lamps were noted. This article examines a unique multi-nozzle rectangular oil lamp that was discovered during Bahnassa's archaeological excavation and is currently on display at the Mallawi Museum. Among instances from the Roman Period, this lamp is relatively unique and belongs to a rare kind of oil lamp.

During the Roman period, the Egyptians used lamps for a variety of purposes, including funeral furnishings, offerings in temples, illumination in homes, public spaces, or festive occasions. Throughout the Mediterranean, multi-nozzle lamps that adhere to well-known Hellenistic and Roman typologies are prevalent. The article is extremely representative of the Egyptian manufacturing of this style of lamp in many nozzles, and it comes from the collections of museums - a corpus of rectangular lamps discovered all over the country.

Clarifying the design and use of this sort of multi-nozzle rectangular oil lamp is one of the goals of this article. So, the paper will compare the Mallawi museum lamp to the display of four Egyptian rectangular oil lamps with several nozzles.

1. Introduction

Man went a long way in his quest to produce light and drive away the darkness. It is possible to consider the earliest mass-produced items in history to be the first artificial oil lamps, which were found in Egypt, Greece, Rome, and other Levantine countries. They were made from a variety of materials, including clay, metal, stone, and alabaster (Sindh 2001; Moussa 2021:230). Clement of Alexandria attributed the creation of lamps to the Egyptians (*Stromata*. I, 16), but excavations have not turned up any conclusive evidence of early Egyptian lamps (Walters 1914:xi; Robins 1939:185).

The lamps that Herodotus (*Histories*. II, 62) observed in Egypt are described as simple cups filled with oil in which the wick floats (Walters 1914:xi). Ancient Egyptian floating-wick lamps were more like hollowed-out pottery bowls; the lamp actually began as a stone in those lamps. They used lamps by providing both oil and wick (Robins 1939:184-5).

Lamps first appeared in Europe in Greece in the sixth century B.C., and they appear to have originated in Athens (Walters 1914: xviii). Despite being under Roman control, Egyptian lamps of the Roman era are diverse and were inspired by Hellenistic art, which in turn was affected by Egyptian art and religion. Roman styles, with some Hellenistic influences, are generally descended from Hellenistic styles.

2. Mallawi Oil Lamp

The Mallawi Museum¹ (fig.1) holds a small collection of clay oil lamps from the El-Minya region that range in date from the Hellenistic period (ca. 323 to 30 BC.) through the Roman Imperial period (ca. 27 BC. to the 5th and 6th centuries AD.) and into the Byzantine period (5th to 15th centuries AD.). The Museum has in its collection a unique oil lamp that was excavated by the Egyptian Antiquities Authority expedition in Middle Egypt at the beginning of the 20th century at Bahnassa. During the Greco-Roman period, this famous historical city, or the famous Oxyrhynchus city² (Ancient Egyptian Pr-Medjed), was the capital of the 19th Province of Upper Egypt.

Information data:

Object type: Multi-nozzle rectangular Oil Lamp

Museum number: 104

Dimensions: W: 6.7 cm; L: 22.5 cm; H: 21 cm.

Material: light red clay

Date: Late 1st century – Early 2nd century AD.

¹ It is a small local museum in Mallawi city that is situated about 45 kilometers to the south of Al-Minya city, the capital of Al-Minya governorate in Middle Egypt.

² The Oxyrhynchus fish, whose name translates to "sharp-nosed," was the subject of an Egyptian-style local religion that gave the city its name. It is one of the most significant archaeological sites ever found. It had a variety of papyri that taught us a lot about Egypt's literary life throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman eras. Menander's dramas, pieces of Euclid's Elements, the Shepherd of Hermas, and many other notable literary fragments were among the manuscripts uncovered at Oxyrhynchus.

Find spot: Oxyrhynchus



Fig.1: Mallawi oil-lamp
cf., by the researcher in Site

This unique, rare oil lamp dates from the second half of the 1st century to the first half of the 2nd century AD. It is a rectangular-shaped lamp with a handle, preserving three of the filling holes in the middle of its disc.³ The middle hole is larger than the side ones, and it is surrounded by two smaller holes, each of which is surrounded by a relief. It seems that the hole in the center is the oil filling-hole, while both of the other two holes were air vents.

The discus is framed by a ridge in relief. The chain relief (equidistant geometric motifs, each made up of circles with different sizes) surrounds the three holes and separates them from one another (the relief is partly damaged on the right edge). The chain relief around the central hole is in the form of a circle, while both those chain reliefs around the two side holes are in the form of a pentagon with three right angles. The ornamentation was executed with clarity and precision.

³ It is the upper outer surface of the lamp and has a rectangular shape.

The form of the oval nozzles,⁴ which have ridged wick-hole sections, the relatively large filling hole with a lip, the relief of the Egyptian-Hellenistic deity Serapis⁵ on the handle, and the light red clay all testify to a Hellenistic origin for this Roman-era lamp. It resembles Chrzanovski's multi-nozzle lamps in certain ways (Chrzanovski 2011), which he believes were likely brought from a workshop in Sarmizegetusa.⁶ They lack a decorative handle but otherwise have a comparable form.

This lamp is most likely not an exact replica of the same type of rectangle lamp. Its form is uncommon, and there are not many instances to support it. This lamp has 20 wick-nozzles (two on each side and sixteen along the lower edge) and a rather lengthy body without volutes.

The solid, floral-shaped, decorated handle has a rear ridge that drops vertically to presumably connect with the lamp's body through a ring behind the handle. The triangular handle decoration of what appears to be a mold-made pottery lamp is decorated with a figure of the bearded deity Serapis over an acanthus coming out of a globe. He is also Himation across both shoulders.

Serapis, whose bust is shown on several clay lamps, was the main member of the Alexandrian triad and is consistently depicted as an elderly man with a beard and a modius. Many lamps feature this modius⁷ (grain measure) headpiece. Serapis has flowing hair, a thick beard, and five unique locks that fall on his forehead.⁸ Another feature of his iconography is the large headpiece on his head, which is commonly recognized as a kalathos or modius, and which denotes the realm of commerce. With such vessels, the grain brought from Egypt was measured. Serapis ensures that the amount and quality of the grain are appropriate and will promote the welfare of the Roman people by wearing a grain measure on his head (Auffarth 2014:29).

The lamp's material is thin, somewhat permeable clay mixed with extremely fine mica, white sand, and brown inclusions. It has a pale crimson hue. The surface is soft, dusty, and covered with a thin layer of white slip. The edges of the breaks and the bottom portion of the handle (the anchor point to the lamp's body), which are detached rather than fractured and reveal that the slip had been moulded, are the only parts of the slip that are poorly preserved on the underside.

The lamp's nozzles have burning marks on them from use in daily life or from being lit in the tombs, depending on how the fire affected the object. It appears that it

⁴ Some nozzles have a circular shape.

⁵ Serapis was a composite deity created for export after serving as a political symbol for the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt (Auffarth 2014:27). Serapis was a syncretistic deity that derived from the worship of the Egyptian gods Osiris and Apis and also borrowed characteristics from other gods, including chthonic abilities connected to the Greek gods Zeus, Hades, and Demeter, as well as Dionysus (Stambaugh 1972:5). He eventually gained a reputation for bringing the yearly flood of the Nile and for bringing fertility and wealth to the area (Nicgorski 2014:153; David 1978/79:185–92). One of the biggest cults in ancient history, that of Serapis, was recognized and practiced in Egypt before spreading to the Levant, Asia, Greece, and Rome.

⁶ It serves as the administrative center for the most famous military and religious Dacia region in Romania.

⁷ Greek: κάλαθος "basket"; Latin: modius.

⁸ For more information about the iconography of Serapis, see: (Hornbostel 1973; Hompson 1978/79:185–92; Tran Tam Tinh 1983; Clerc & Leclant 1986:279–80).

was employed in locations with large areas, like temples, because there were a lot more nozzles than usual.

3. Parallel Lamps

Since this lamp lacks a precise equivalent, especially given the large number of nozzles, one must think about parallels for the discus motif independently from those of the rectangular form, the distribution of nozzles throughout the lamp's body, and a speculative correlation between this and the fabric. The handle and discus decorations turned out to be the most trustworthy for dating this lamp. The discus has a distinctive and uncommon theme. Four rectangular oil lamps (figs.2-5) at the Louvre Museum and the other three in private collections serve as the closest analogues. Those lamps are as the follows:



Fig.2: Rectangular oil lamp - Bouvier collection N.inv.B 253 cf., Chrzanovski 2011:222, no.7.



Fig.3: Rectangular oil lamp -Private Collection cf., www.medusa-art.com/antiquities-gallery/roman/roman-rectangular-oil-lamp.html (Accessed on 15 January 2023)



Fig.4: Rectangular oil lamp - Bouvier collection N.inv.B 256 cf., Chrzanovski 2011:222, no.8.



Fig.5: Rectangular oil lamp - Louvre Museum, AF 1242 cf., Louvre Museum online

Based on the design of the Mallawi lamp and other similar ones, this lamp could be a replica of the traditional North African lamps at the Sarmizegetusa Museum (figs.1 & 3), which were primarily created in the cities of Dacia and Sarmizegetusa. In each of these instances, the discus has three holes, always with the largest being in the center and being encircled by a circle of relief, which appears to be the primary filling hole, and the other two being two air vents on either side. Based on the ornamentation and fabric quality, Chrzanovski (2011) identified nine parallel lamps of this type, each made in a distinct production facility. The discus design is executed more sloppily on those Sarmizegetusa lamps, and the embellishments on the shoulder are positioned farther apart.

The four parallel rectangular clay lamps,⁹ which were discovered in various locations around Egypt (Alexandria: nos.1 and 3, Antioe: no.4, and an unidentified province: no.3), may be dated from the second half of the 1st century to the first half of the 2nd century AD.¹⁰ They seem to be made at a nearby workshop that imitates Egyptian manufacturing and has a similar discus shape (Berti 1983:149–152). The fabric and slip are the parts that are most similar to Mallawi lamps. They are made of

⁹ There are other parallel lamps that are the same as those four; for more information, see: (Selesnow 1988:no.54, 125 et pl.10; Hayes 1980:no.186, 39 and pl.19; Rosenthal & Sivan 1978:64; Bailey 1988).

¹⁰ For more information about the four lamps, see: (nos.1 & 3) (Chrzanovski 2011:nos.7 and 6; (no.2) www.medusa-art.com/antiquities-gallery/roman/roman-rectangular-oil-lamp.html (Accessed on 15 January 2023); (no.4) Louvre Museum Online.

light brown or orange clay with a diluted reddish slip. There are no figures represented on the discus.

Each one has ten round wick nozzles that are spaced evenly along the tank's three sides and are encircled by a raised border in relief. Each of them has a short projecting handle that is ornamented in one of two distinct ways: the handles on lamps (nos. 1 & 2) are triangular with leaves on them, while those on (nos. 3 & 4) are rectangular with line reliefs. The four lamps are totally connected at the handles, unlike the Mallawi lamp, which only has a partial connection.

4. General Discussion

Examples of multi-nozzle oil lamps have been discovered in Egypt date back to the Greco-Roman era and develop into a common, mass-produced good that was accessible to all socioeconomic classes. This can be explained by the new way of producing mould and the increased accessibility of oil during the Late Period (Yarmolovich & Chepel 2020:71). These lamps were used by the Egyptians for a variety of reasons, but they were primarily employed for three things:

- (1) For lighting houses,¹¹ they were either mounted on brackets or placed in wall niches, hanging from chains, or, in certain cases, hung by the handle from a nail or rested on some sort of support (Walters 1914:xiv-xv). Additionally, lamps would have been needed for lighting in public structures and businesses, like theatres and stores (De Rosa 2014:3).
- (2) As well as funeral furnishings¹² and offerings made to the deceased and placed on offering tables in the tombs. Lamps were thought to illuminate the passage to the afterlife for the deceased (Bard 2005:499), components of funeral ceremonies, in which case the flames of the lamp would be seen as preserving the soul of the departed and lighting his path (Heller 1932:193-196).
- (3) In addition to being burned in temples, lamps were the focus of votive offerings to the gods. Lamps are frequently referenced in the context of a temple or religious occasion in papyrological record. Oil lamps were still mentioned in cult-related writings from the Roman era: priests offered oil to the gods every day (Yarmolovich & Chepel 2020:72). Additionally, their lamps have occasionally been associated with magic symbols (McGinnis 2012:4; Mastrocinque 2007:87-99).

The 5th century BC. historian Herodotus (*Histories*. II, 62) observed the Egyptian lighting and described the "Festival of Lamp Lighting" in Sais, during which the entire city would light oil lamps that were left burning all night around homes (Moussa 2021:230). There are also outstanding applications for lamps, the

¹¹ Also, the maintenance of family iconostases was seen as one of the most significant ritual tasks carried out by women in terms of household religious practice (Brady 1999:12). Women were in charge of lighting the lights in front of the sacred objects, caring for them, dressing them, and performing the daily sacrifices and incense burns (McGinnis 2012:76).

¹² Numerous lamps discovered in tombs don't seem to have ever been used; instead, they were left there, like vases, for the use of the deceased. Numerous inscriptions, like one on a sepulchral cippus in the British Museum that instructs the deceased's heirs to burn a candle in his tomb each month, attest to the fact that the latter practice was not unknown to the Romans (Walters 1914:xv).

most notable of which is the custom of giving them as holiday or new year gifts (Walters 1914:xvi), when everyone burns a plethora of lamps outside of their homes. These remain lit throughout the whole night, giving the occasion its name, the Feast of Lamps (Robins 1939:185; Yarmolovich & Chepel 2020:71).

4.1. Manufacturing

These lamps are made of reddish clay, similar to those used to make pottery. The red colour is caused by the existence of red ochre; however, it varies regionally in quality and tone (cultivated Land) (Walters 1914:xvi). Few instances of this kind of lamps were produced in the south of Egypt during the Roman era, notably those with bas-relief sculpture, which was centered in the Delta, Fayum Ahnasya, and the North Valley (Kadous 2001:251).¹³ Alexandria was one of Egypt's major hubs for the manufacture of lamps. The upper and bottom components of those rectangular lamps, which were created using this technology, were pressed into two moulds. The two parts were then wetted along the flat sides and adhered to one another inside the mould (Curta 2016:62).

Lamps have always been either hand-modeled or produced from moulds.¹⁴ In a harder and finer clay than the pattern, the moulds were fashioned after a pattern lamp (Bailey 1975:12; De Rosa 2014:1). They were constructed in two pieces and joined together using mortises and tenons.¹⁵ The lamp's bottom portion served as its body, and the other piece served as its decorative discus. Using the fingers to press the clay into the mould, the figurative embellishment was added using models or stamps. The lamp's two sides were attached while the clay was still wet, pared apart with a tool, and the filling hole was then punctured (Walters 1914:xvii). Prior to burning, they were glazed or slipped (covered with an extra layer of clay to make the cloth less porous and better able to hold fuel) (Bailey 1975:2-8; De Rosa 2014:10-11). The transition from forged-wheel to moulded lamps occurred in the 2nd century BC.

5. Rectangular Multi-nozzles Lamps

The majority of lamps typically have one nozzle; however, there were no restrictions on the number. The name of the two-nozzle lamp was Σιμνζοζ (Kadous 2001:249). Furthermore, the lamp had more than two nozzles; it was known as δίμυξοζ, τρίμυξοζ, and πολύμυξοζ (Walters 1914:xii). In Greece throughout the Archaic and Classical Greece, multi-nozzle lamps¹⁶ were used in sanctuaries. The oldest surviving specimens were discovered in the Athenian Agora in the latter part of the 5th century BC. (Howland 1958:128). One can observe the development of a special kind of

¹³ It is obvious that Alexandria's theatre output differs much from Egypt's since it was inspired by other civilizations and foreign artists (Hayes 1980).

¹⁴ Or they made on a wheel.

¹⁵ Beginning in Greece in the early 3rd century BC., the inventive technique of making lamps from two-piece moulds spread fast throughout the Mediterranean region. The lamps constructed from moulds were easier to manufacture and more durable than those manufactured from wheels (Yarmolovich & Chepel 2020:71; Howland 1958:129), for evidence and explanation of this transitional period, see also (Bailey 1975:12-16).

¹⁶ In particular, ring-shaped lamps with multiple nozzles.

nozzle that became a defining characteristic of the period's lamps during the Roman Period (Walters 1914:xxiii). Hayes (1980:39-40) gave a date that would not go beyond the 1st century AD out of extreme caution.

5.1. The Shape

The multi-nozzle lamps have abnormal shapes; typically, they have a rectangular, boat-like, circular, or oval shape. In the last two of these cases, the nozzles extend slightly past the rim; in the first two, they are arranged along the sides (Walters 1914:xxvi).

The rectangular lamp's wick may be inserted into each nozzle through a hole. The use of a nozzle¹⁷ would enable users to efficiently change the wick's length, which would help regulate the flame (Bailey 1980; Bailey 1988:1). Similar to the Mallawi lamp, there was another form of lamp used at rich homes during the Hellenistic period called a corona lamp (fig.6) that could have up to twenty nozzles and had an entirely different design (Bruneau 1965:39 &111). The lights were either hanging from a ceiling or lay flat, and the design persisted throughout the Roman era (Bussi re & Wohl 2018:419).



Fig.6: Multi-nozzles corona oil-lamp -1st century BC.–1st century AD.
cf., Metropolitan Museum of Art online

The majority of the ancient Greek lamps discovered had no handle, and this kind of light with a handle originates from the Emperor Trajan onwards (Walters 1905:401). The flat, vertically projecting portion of these lamps, which have several nozzles, is attached to the top of the triangular hand and is often decorated with conspicuous human shapes, most of which are Greek or Egyptian gods (either full or half-shaped), Nile fish, birds, animals, or plants (Bailey 1980:15).

5.2. The Decoration

Greek lamps are often unadorned and plain (Walters 1914:xii). The first evidence of relief ornamentation in North Africa dates to the 2nd century BC. (Walters 1914:xi). The earliest subjects seen on lamps, however, are relatively straightforward in nature. When discussing the themes in relief filling the discus or the handle used for the adornment of lamps, we are solely concerned with those from the Roman period (Walters 1914:xxvi – xxvii).

¹⁷ For the obvious reason that the nozzle's shape is more crucial to the lamp's personality than the handle, this is the ideal categorization for lamps: When the latter is gone, the body's shape is unaffected, unlike when a nozzle is absent (Walters 1914:xxiii).

These lamps are embellished with various molded motifs in raised relief on the handles (such as this one in the Mallawi Museum, which is decorated with a figure of the god Serapis) and rare examples on their discuses (fig.7), divine heads and busts like those of the Alexandrian triad (Serapis-Isis-Harpocrates), Bes, Bastet, and others, in addition to various geometric and vegetal patterns. When Egyptian cults were popular in Rome during the late Roman Republic and early Imperial periods, lamps were utilized in the worship of Isis and the other two members of her triad (Serapis and Harpocrates) (Christopoulos 2010:278). All of these modelled lamps have these figures, and they all appear to have been common in Egypt. A few of the Egyptian lamps depict Greek deities like Eros and Psyche, Erotes, and others (Walters 1914:xxviii).



Fig.7: Rectangular oil lamp decorated with a scene on the discus
 - Bouvier collection N.inv.B 251
 cf. Chrzanowski 2011:220, no.4.

The idea that religions can be "traded" is a classic polemical argument. The notion of globalization as a unique phenomenon in history emerged with the spread of economic goods and culture in earlier historical periods. During the reign of the Roman Empire, early Hellenistic symbols spread throughout the Empire (Auffarth 2014:18-21). The god Serapis, who dwelled on the handle of the Mallawi Museum lamp, is one of the forms of this globalization; Serapis used iconography from other religions to represent both plenty and resurrection while having a Greek aspect with Egyptian accents. A prominent example of how the Egyptian religion was changed and remade to adapt it for export is the deity Serapis (Auffarth 2014:28; Mifsud & Farrugia 2008:51).

At the command of King Ptolemy I Soter, the cult of Serapis was promoted throughout the 3rd century BC. in an effort to bring the Greeks and Egyptians together under his rule. The Ptolemaic kings deliberately pursued a policy of promoting the Serapis religion. Throughout the Roman Empire, Serapis gained popularity and frequently replaced Osiris as Isis' spouse in temples outside of Egypt. The term "Serapis" has undergone several efforts to be etymologized; nonetheless, various ancient writers have confirmed that Serapis was a name for the sun since his likeness frequently had a halo of light around its head (Ferguson 1985:36). His name is unmistakably derived from Osiris, the Egyptian deity of the afterlife, and Apis, the holy bull god of Memphis (John 1972:5).

In Egypt and the rest of the empire, associations with the deity Serapis, his likeness, and in particular his visage, were significant expressions of Roman imperial ideology (Nicgorski 2014:165). The sculpted reliefs and textiles in this exhibition, which date from the 4th to the 6th centuries AD., brightly show how he came to represent the varied culture of late Roman Egypt (Nicgorski 2014:165).

Roman slaves, freedmen, and even the emperors themselves participated in the religion of Serapis. Temples, artefacts bearing cultic representations of Serapis, inscriptions, and literary works from around the empire further attested the cult's widespread geographic distribution, which was partially attributed to the sailors of the Roman military and trade ships' devotion to Serapis (and other Egyptian deities) (Tomorad 2005:241–53.). The worship in Rome was supported by the Roman emperors, particularly Vespasian, who credited his health to the Egyptian goddesses Isis and Serapis (Lembke 1994).

5.3. The Regions

With the exception of areas where local lamp production was already well established prior to annexation by the Empire, this type was actually very uncommon in the Roman Empire. Local imitations and adaptations of well-known types from other parts of the empire are also a common occurrence, in addition to a small number of imports (Chrzanowski 2011:219). Careful examinations may be able to establish the provenance and date since the lamps' typology is a hallmark of local ceramic manufacture (Moussa 2021:229).

In fact, this kind of lamp is only seen in extremely specific places and times. They are widespread in the Mediterranean. Although no workshops or moulds have yet been discovered, it is believed that ateliers replicating them existed in the northern Adriatic (Berti 1983). Religious and cultural objects were traded and transported along trade routes. The most well-known active component of the larger ancient globalisation phenomena is trade between Egypt and Rome (Auffarth 2014:24). From Egypt, they spread to all of the Mediterranean nations and influenced the local culture.

Rectangular lamps with several nozzles are not widely reported, either in Egypt or in the vast list of locations where copies of those lamps have been discovered; they are currently on exhibit in numerous museums both inside and outside of Egypt. They may be found in several locations in Egypt, including Memphis, Alexandria, Antinoe, and Faiyum.¹⁸ On the other hand, Dacian artefacts from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. were discovered all over the globe, in Dacia as well as in the nearby Roman provinces, particularly in Pannonia, but also in Moesia (Chrzanowski 2011:218).

6. Conclusion

In the Greco-Roman period of Egyptian history, oil lamps evolved into a commonplace, mass-produced item that was accessible to all social classes. This can be explained by the new way of producing mould and the increased accessibility of oil during the Late Period.

The Mallawi oil lamp with ornamentation on its discus and handle was found in the Roman layers at Bahnassa. Lamps may usually have one or two nozzles, but some have even more. This lamp held a special place since it is the only rectangular

¹⁸ For more information see: (Walters 1914:65-66; Chrzanowski 2011).

lamp with large number of nozzles discovered in Egypt so far. Based on the fabric's properties, it may have been produced in the area where it was found, Bahnassa. It is unquestionably one of the uncommon oil lamp discoveries from Roman Egypt, dating to the late 1st century to the early 2nd century AD.

Mallawi lamp belongs to rectangular multi-nozzles type. I believed it would be more practical and helpful for the reader to provide the manufacturer or origin of the rectangular oil lamps with four parallel Egyptian multi-nozzles. We refer to lamps from Alexandria, Antinoe, and other unidentified provinces as the latter.

The following factors allow us to pinpoint a probable location of manufacture or origin based on the quantity and shape of nozzles, the colour of the clay, and the presence of mica, even if information regarding the place of manufacture or origin is lacking.

A figurative handle adornment and often round-tipped nozzles are two features that distinguish this lamp as being of Roman date. Early specimens sometimes had nozzles in a variety of other shapes. But this lamp's Hellenistic influence is evident, particularly in the depiction of Serapis on the handle.

The focus of this presentation is the lamp with ornamentation on the handle of the Mallawi lamp, which is said to represent the god Serapis. This syncretic Egyptian deity was most closely identified with ensuring the life-giving Nile flood throughout the older Hellenistic and Roman periods. He served as the supporter of Egypt's ensuing fertility, riches, and strength.

The items that have been most readily duplicated using the over-molding process are rectangular lamps. However, in this instance, just the form is replicated, more or less skillfully, and the aspect of the paste makes it possible to distinguish the copied lamps from the real ones in most instances. The rectangular lamps' measurements (diameter or length-width) are not always fairly consistent; the height of the tank is less frequent, and the diameter of the bottom is quite rare.

The replacement of large factories by a proliferation of small local workshops, including the production, is of low technical level due to the obvious poor manufacturing of the Mallawi lamp, which is evident in the poor distribution of the nozzles around the lamp as they do not line up in a straight line.

In the case of the most difficult areas of the typology of the Egyptian lamps, due to the combined effects of the massive dissemination of major workshops, the multiplication of local imitations, and the overmolding successively of the same types over long periods, it is necessary to remain very careful in the identifications of the region and date of manufacture.

Local or regional archaeological sites in the Mediterranean area frequently contain oil lamps. The Romans occupied the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1st and 2nd centuries BC., capturing city after city and kingdom after country. The Mediterranean Sea then offered chances for commerce and interchange, making maritime travel and trade less hazardous. They spread throughout the Mediterranean region, starting in Egypt, and into the local culture.

Many Egyptian rectangular lamps have made their way into private and public collections across the world, but far too many of these items have been taken out of their native settings, limiting research into these collections to purely typological and historical studies.

Roman lamp designs gradually influenced Egypt, as evidenced by the discovery of Roman models and types there, though occasionally with additions or modifications. The most significant of these is the size of the lamp under study in this article, in contrast to the dimensions of rectangular lamps from the same era found in numerous museums around the world.

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