

# Olga Wasilewska

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## Some Lamps from Tell Farama (Pelusium)

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## SOME LAMPS FROM TELL FARAMA (PELUSIUM)

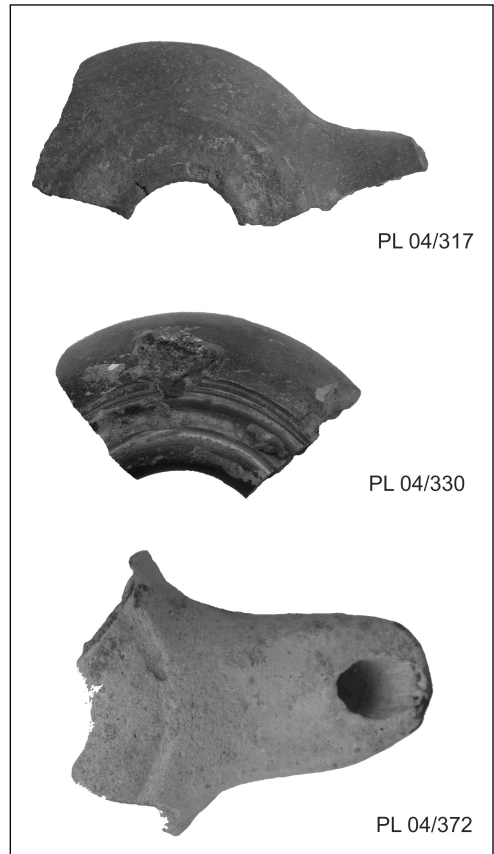
Olga Wasilewska

Four seasons of excavations at Tell Farama West (ancient Pelusium) have brought to light a considerable number of lamps: in 2003 and 2004, 21 fragments from different periods mainly from the theater area and the immediate surroundings (Gawlikowski 2004) and in 2005 and 2006 12 pieces from sector 1 (Jakubiak 2006) and 24 altogether from sectors 2 and 3 (Jakubiak 2006 and report in this volume). The material from the Roman house with mosaics (Sector 2) is of greatest importance for chronological reasons; these are local or Alexandrian-influenced examples, mostly of 4th century date.

The whole assemblage, 57 pieces in all, consists mainly of small lamp fragments, heavily eroded due to factors like salty soil and high humidity, often not complete enough to allow detailed identification of the form. The lamps discussed here (12 objects) are believed to be the most representative of the collection.

### HELLENISTIC LAMPS

Of the Hellenistic lamps, most of which were excavated in the theatre area in the 2004 season, three fragments merit particular attention.



*Fig. 1. Select Hellenistic lamps  
(Photo O. Wasilewska)*

**PL 04/317 [Fig. 1]**

Theatre area, western parodos.

Reddish brown fabric, brown slipped. Wheel-made. Round body, undecorated reservoir, two concentric grooves around fill hole. Probably long nozzle (damaged). Fragmentary.

Alexandrian-influenced Hellenistic lamp (cf. Młynarczyk 1997: Type A, Fig. 5), comparable to a lamp in the British Museum collection considered as probably Egyptian, from the 1st century BC into the 1st century AD (Bailey 1975: Pl. 112, Q 589, 271-272).

**PL 04/330 [Fig. 1]**

Theatre area, western parodos.

Orange brown fabric, black glaze inside and out, thinned wash on rim. Wheel-made. Fragmentary.

The fabric and profile of this lamp is paralleled by a group of 4th century BC Athenian lamps from the British Museum (Bailey 1975: Pl. 15, Q 71 and Q 76, 51-53), including a lamp from Al Mina dated to the first third of the 4th century BC (Bailey 1975: Pls 16 and 17, Q 78, 53).

**PL 04/372 [Fig. 1]**

Theatre area, western edge of orchestra.

Light orange-cream fabric, creamy slip. Wheel-made. Flat-topped nozzle, rounded at the tip; inward-sloping rim emphasized with a groove. Fragmentary.

Fabric and shape most similar to a lamp of unknown provenience from the British Museum, dated to the first half of the 3rd century BC or a little later (Bailey 1975: Pl. 138, Q 747, 354). Another close parallel is a 3rd century BC North African lamp, now in the Sabratha Museum (Joly 1974: Tav. I, n. 6, 17).

**LATE ROMAN LAMPS**

The function of the theater area as a rubbish dump in the period after its abandonment needs to be kept in mind (Jakubiak 2005: 61-68). The Hellenistic material presented above was found deposited next to relatively late material, like a 2nd century AD lamp with palm motif (close parallel from Mons Claudianus, especially no. 30 from a Hadrianic context, cf. Knowles 2006: Fig. 5.3, 342, 344) and lamp PL 04/368.

**PL 04/368 [Fig. 2]**

Theatre area, western edge of orchestra.

Dull brown fabric, unslipped. Mouldmade. Handle with two vertical grooves. Damaged body, two grooves on shoulders.

Popular 4th century type, identifiable thanks to the characteristic handle. Known analogies present different discus motifs, e.g. menorah (Bailey 1988: Pl. 44, Q 2061, MLA, lamp from Egypt, Loeschcke Type VIII) and monogrammed cross (Bailey 1988: Pl. 44, Q 2066, lamp from Egypt, Loeschcke Type VIII). The same type is represented by a group of lamps from a late 4th century AD deposit from Kom el-Dikka, Alexandria (Młynarczyk 1995). A similar example from Saqqara has been linked with 4th century AD Alexandrian material (Bailey 2001: 119-135, Pl. XVIII.18). Several similar lamp fragments dated to the late 3rd and 4th century AD come from earlier French excavations at Pelusium (Dixneuf 2003: 91, Pl. 19:1a-1c). This type, presumably connected with Alexandrian designs, seems to have been very popular at the site.

Among the mass of typical lamps from Roman and Late Roman Egypt found in Pelusium, the following are distinctive.

## PL 05/surface [Fig. 2]

Sector 1, surface.

Pale reddish fabric, unslipped. Mould-made. Impressed eagle image on discus. Circular dot marking place of handle. Herringbone pattern on shoulders.

A frequent discus motif, the eagle was commonly represented on Roman lamps from Italy, as well as on provincial lamps from contexts of various date. Examples from the British Museum collection give a clear idea of the different lamp types and patterns widespread in the Mediterranean. Almost the same eagle iconography appears on Early Roman Loeschke Type IV from Cyprus (about 40-100 AD, Bailey 1988: Q 2414, 304, Pl. 64) and a late Broneer type XXIX lamp from Ephesus (about 550-650 AD, Bailey 1988: Q 3177, 389, Pl. 111).

No close analogy for the Pelusium fragment has been identified. The type appears to be a fairly common mouldmade form with figurative discus surrounded by a floral or geometric garland motif. The nearest is probably a 3rd century AD lamp from Cyprus (Bailey 1988: Q 2518, 311, Pl. 68).

Lamps with figural images on the discus and a wreath or geometric pattern on the shoulder are well known on provincial, as well as Italian lamps (large group of 3rd century AD lamps from Italian workshops, Bailey 1980: Q 1386-Q 1396, Pls 82-83, 366-368), but in all these cases lamps of this form have a handle. The Pelusium lamp has a rounded button or rather a bruise instead of a handle. A similar "semi-handle" is known from a large group of local Egyptian, 3rd-4th century AD lamps with palm motifs in the decoration (Bailey 1988: Q 2188-Q 2196, Pl. 50, 264-265, all 3rd-to-4th century AD; also from Karanis, from an early 2nd to mid 3rd century AD context, Shier

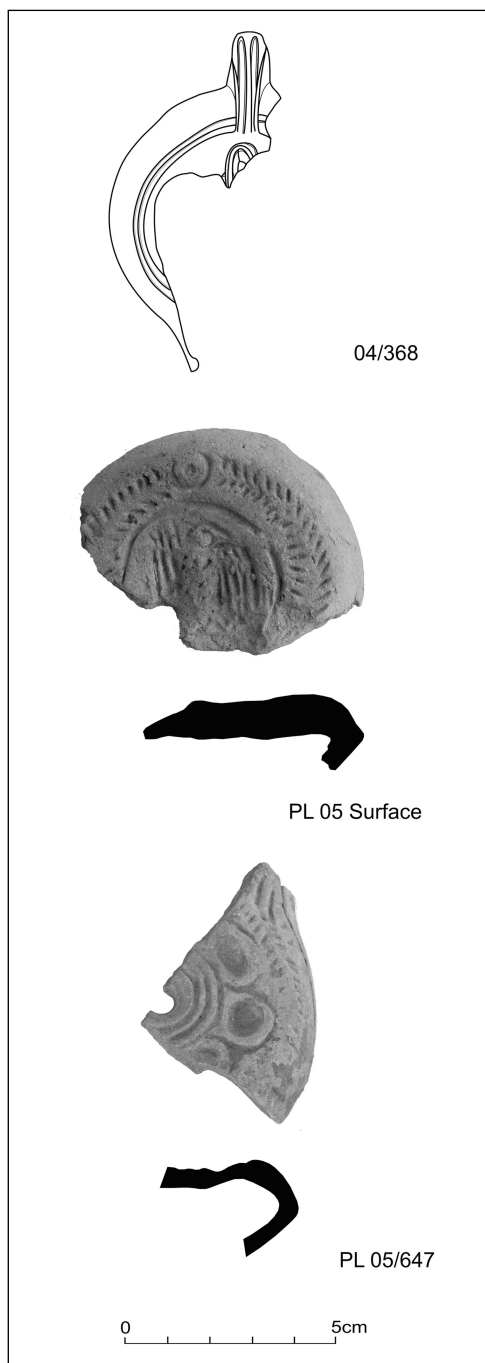


Fig. 2. Late Roman lamps from the theater area (Photo and drawing O. Wasilewska)

1978: 141). Judging by the quality and the fabric, the lamp is undoubtedly locally made. Consequently, we may be dealing with a strong Roman tradition (eagle on discus) modified locally, especially the lamp shape and missing handle (Młynarczyk 1998, on Egyptian workshops adapting Italian motifs).

**PL 05/647** [Fig. 2]

Sector 1, area I.

Pinkish-cream fabric, unslipped. Mould-made. Herringbone pattern around discus, row of relief dots around fill hole. Fragmentary.

Possibly an example of semicircular type without separate handle, marked only by a suitable pattern with vertical grooves, suggesting a Palestinian provenience. Similar handle design is found at Pella and at Bet Shean on lamps dated to the first half of the 4th century AD (Hadad 1997: no. 7, 154). The type, which is frequent on various Palestinian sites, is usually described as typical of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD (Rosenthal, Sivan 1978: nos 450-451, also from the Roman baths at Hammat Gader, cf. Hirschfeld, Solar 1981: Fig. 6, 210).

**PL 05/10** [Fig. 3]

Sector 1, surface.

Dark reddish-brown fabric, unslipped. Mouldmade. Boot-shaped.

Boot-shaped lamp, a very popular type with parallels in the Byzantine material, e.g. probably Egyptian, 6th-8th century AD lamp from the Bonn University Museum collection (Hübinger 1993: Taf. 35, Kat. No. 298, 150). The type is frequent at various sites in the Eastern Mediterranean, including for example Tel Mefalsim near Gaza (6th-early 8th century AD; Rahmani 1983: Fig. 1:2, 221).

Several objects from our collection find parallels in Alexandria and this is especially true of the material recorded in the Roman house with mosaic explored in the 2005 and 2006 seasons. All of the material appears to be of 4th century AD date. The following pieces merit particular attention.

**PL 06/2/52** [Fig. 4]

Sector 2, loc. I, deposit under mosaic floor. Reddish-brown fabric, unslipped. Mould-made. Body fragments with small part of nozzle preserved. On discus, ring in the center and two framing rings; vine leaves and grape clusters on the shoulder. Fragmentary.

**PL 06/2/421** [Fig. 4]

Sector 2, loc. VIII.

As PL 06/2/52. Vine leaves and clusters of grapes on the shoulder. Fragmentary.

These two lamps may were made in the same mould, PL 06/2/52 being more blurred and hence a later-generation lamp in this case. The decoration is comparable to a group of Attic lamps from the 3rd to

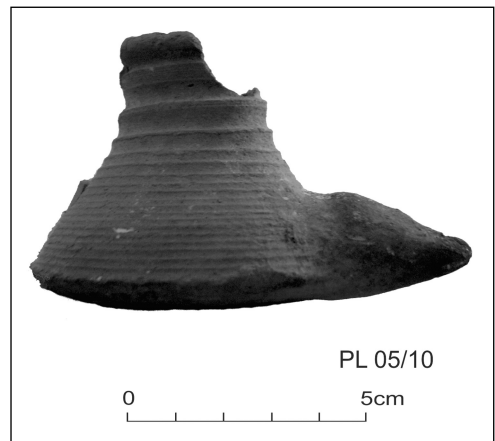


Fig. 3. *Boot-shaped lamp*  
(Photo O. Wasilewska)

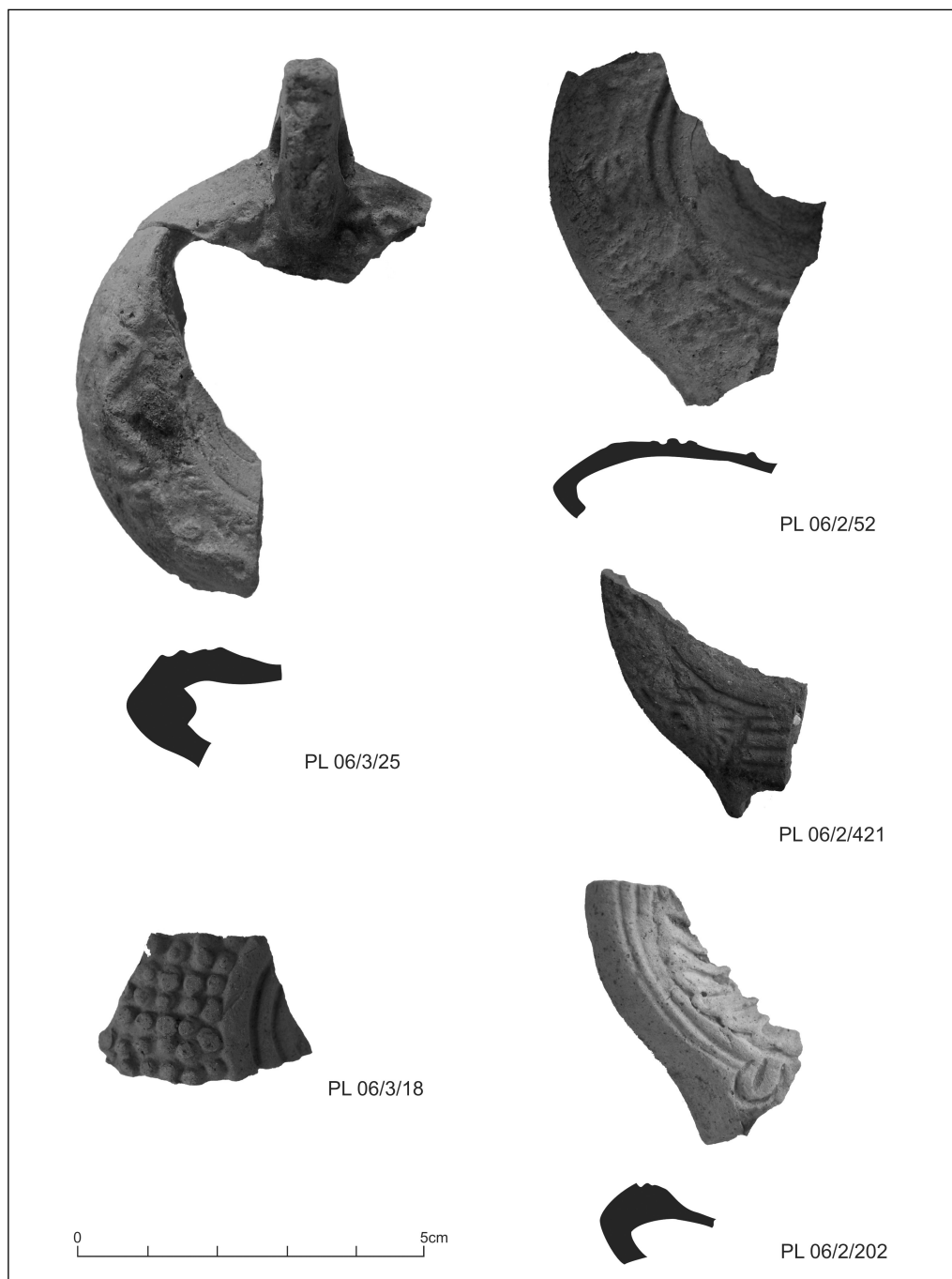


Fig. 4. Lamps from the Late Roman house  
(Photo and drawing O. Wasilewska)

4th centuries AD, also with a leaves and clusters pattern and parallel discus form (Perlzweig 1961: 1515, 1516 Pl. 28, 146). The Pelusium lamps may have been local copies of a well-liked model (Vine-and-ray type), e.g. example from Benghazi (Cyrenaica), dated to the 3rd through early 4th century AD (Bailey 1985: 197, Pl. 16.III 9). A similar lamp, also recognized as a local copy, was found in a late 4th century AD pottery deposit from Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria (Młynarczyk 1995). The pattern of horizontal bars at the base of the nozzle seems to be a variation typical of the Egyptian material (Młynarczyk 1995). To my mind, the motif could have originated from the frog-type lamps, a long-lived and well-liked Egyptian form (e.g., Shier 1978: Pl. 3 and 21, 25-27, Type 5.1 and A.5.2c frog lamps).

**PL 06/2/202 [Fig. 4]**

Sector 2, loc. IV.

Creamy-beige fabric, unslipped. Mouldmade. Two rings around discus with rosette of curving petals; characteristic "double knot" at base of nozzle. Fragmentary.

The "double knot" at the base of the nozzle is parallel to a 2nd/3rd century AD lamp from Moharem Bey, Alexandria (Tran Tam Tinh, Jentel 1993: Fig. 56, Pl. 15, 81). Analogies exist also in a group of lamps from the 4th century AD deposit on Kom el-Dikka (Młynarczyk 1997: 134, Fig. 2.g, 138). The motif appears to be characteristic of Alexandrian 3rd-4th century AD lamps. The dating of a similar lamp from Alexandrian excavations, considered as Egyptian or Palestinian, to the 2nd century AD (Élaigne 1998: Fig. 10, 87, 98) appears to be too early.

**PL 06/3/25 [Fig. 4]**

Sector 3, floor level.

Light beige fabric, unslipped. Mouldmade. Shoulder pattern consisting of double spirals and stamped dots; herringbone wreath next to discus rim. Fragmentary.

A ornament and handle of this fragment resembles 2nd/3rd century AD lamps from the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria (Tran Tam Tinh, Jentel 1993: Figs 44, 48, especially Fig. 50, 76, Fig. 168, 169), incidentally all with Serapis images on the discus. However, similar fragments from Kom el-Dikka have been found in a late 4th century AD deposit (Młynarczyk 1995, Fig. 5.d).

**PL 06/3/18 [Fig. 4]**

Sector 3, floor level.

Brown fabric, unslipped. Mouldmade. Base fragment. Two concentric base rings and five or six rows of globules on the lower body wall. Fragmentary.

The decoration and base form revealed by this fragment resembles mid-3rd century AD lamps from the Athenian Agora (Perlzweig 1961: 1259, Pl. 25, 138), as well as some 4th century AD forms (Perlzweig 1961: 1272, Pl. 37, 138). It is also the only lamp fragment from the Roman house without strict analogies in the Alexandrian material.

In summary, it should be emphasized that a study of the lamp assemblage from the four seasons of excavations at Pelusium has verified earlier chronological determinations concerning the deposits in both the theater and the Roman house with mosaic. The deposits in the theater have been confirmed as chronologically mixed, while the assemblage from the Roman house is generally of 4th century AD or slightly earlier date.

Moreover, the finds: local-made lamp, imported material and locally made copies imitating well-liked foreign models, they all give some information about Pelusiac trade contacts and sources of inspiration for a local production.

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