THE LUCHNARIA
Inscribed Lamps of the
Byzantine Period
by
EUGENIA L. NITOWSKI

Occasional Papers of the Horn Archaeological Museum
Andrews University
Number 4
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To
C. G.
and
Siegfried H. Horn

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth; His Light is like a niche in which is a Lamp, the Lamp in glass and the glass like a glittering star, kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West whose oil would almost give Light even though no fire did touch it; Light upon Light.

Quran 24:35

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Eugenia L. Nitowski
CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF
THE LAMPS

"One may remark that to work out the chronology
of the candlestick type will be a difficult task, because
of the very slight changes in its structure, and the
fact that it is perhaps the commonest of all types."1
Common, yes, but not with the meaning ordinary, but
rather, popular. The term important could even be
used when one realizes that this form lasted for nearly
three centuries, longer than any other Palestinian type.
The study of this kind of lamp has been marked by
confusion and frequent discussion, but with few break-
throughs and little originality in interpretation.

It is difficult to say exactly who was responsible
for attaching the stigma of ignorance and gross distor-
tion to the inscriptions on this form. Such phrases as,
"they were written in barbarous Greek, the words
being often misspelt, and the letters frequently braced
together or turned upside down," occur as early as
1871.2 But the real credit rests with R. A. S. Mac-
alister in his publication of the excavations he con-
ducted at Gezer during the turn of the century. It
would be his descriptions of the lamps, his original as-
essment, which scholars would continue to repeat for
many years. His most unforgettable statement, "the
common legend ΦΩΣ ΧΥ ΦΕΝ ΠΑΣΙΝ, blundered into

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unintelligibility by several stages of unintelligent copying, till it has been reduced to a mere symmetrical pattern,"1 would be responsible for the inability to perceive the typological sequence in any way other than a deteriorating evolution. To him may also be attributed the name "candlestick lamp,"2 which, like his other comments, has regrettably remained to this day. In 1896, Charles Clermont-Ganneau reasserted a name which he had proposed eight years earlier: "lychnarion" or "lychnaria."3 Unfortunately his reassertion was no more effective than his original attempt, because it was "candlestick lamp" which took root.

What Macalister saw was so obvious, so simple, that it was beyond question—it could not be challenged. The simplicity was taken for granted to the point that inaccuracies were overlooked. There had always been three points of discussion: that this form's evolution must be from intelligible to unintelligible, that distortion was caused by an ignorance and non-chalance in copying, and that the candlestick decoration on the nozzle must indeed be a Christian palm branch.

Although the lamps had been listed among excavation reports since the mid 1800's, the main writers can be divided into three groups which illustrate the development of the history of the study of the lamps. The earliest dominant writers include: Charles Warren, Charles Clermont-Ganneau, and R. A. S. Macalister. Warren’s writings were simply repetative, beginning with The Recovery of Jerusalem, published in 1871, and reused word for word in The Survey of Western Palestine: Jerusalem of 1884. He recognized four groups: the luchnaria kala type, two forms of phos christou


pheni pacin, and one somewhat unknown form. The Greek was called barbarous and for the most part unintelligible. The nozzle designs listed were the cross, the candlestick, and the palm branch, and were accompanied by little description.

Charles Clermont-Ganneau was one of the most unnoticed of the writers on these lamps. He attempted to connect the lamps with liturgical services and his naming them after an inscription on the lamps themselves showed a preliminary classification and a recognition of a non-restrictive name in the choice of Lychnaria for the designation for this particular family.

R. A. S. Macalister has been popular and frequently quoted, but was too quick in his analysis and not careful enough. For example: "In another lamp from one of the tombs—I think from 126, but cannot find the note..."4 Nothing more needs to be added.

The following group, including Florence Day, Chester McCown, O. R. Sellers and D. C. Baramki, and Charles Kennedy, forms the next stage in development.

In 1942, Florence Day published a well thought out, systematic study of Christian and Early Islamic lamps.2 She tried to establish "a simple chronological order," and recognized the simultaneous use of Greek and Arabic in inscriptions, but did not connect it with any particular lamp form in this family. But like Macalister, she did not recognize the Luchnaria to contain Arabic: ". . . belongs to what Macalister called the 'candlestick' type. There is evidence for considering that this type also continues into the Islamic period, though to the writer's knowledge, it has not yet been found with Arabic inscriptions.5

The excavations at Tell en-Nasbe produced a considerable corpus of lamps which were seriously

2. Day, pp. 64-79.
3. Ibid., p. 77.
worked into a typological sequence. Among these appeared several with Greek inscriptions. Chester McCown's description is disappointing: "... the maker of the mold turned some letters upside down or half way over and mistook others. Evidently he had no conception of the meaning of the sentence and no knowledge of the Greek alphabet."1 It will become evident in a later chapter that it was McCown who misunderstood the Greek.

O. R. Sellers and D. C. Baramki, in their excavations of a major tomb complex at Silet edh-Dhahr, found ninety-eight lamps of this type mixed in with varieties ranging from Herodian to Late Byzantine.2 Few of these lamps were discussed which does a great disservice to those who especially wish to study this form, since they are inaccessible. They call the nozzle design a candlestick or menorah which they say develops into a palm branch, later traced in an extensive article.3 The attribution to origin is interesting: "The earliest candlestick lamps, which have a Jewish origin, may have been purchased from Jewish potters; but Christian potters adopted the design and by cross decorations or pious inscriptions made these lamps Christian."4 This would intimate a degeneracy in imitation by Christian potters in copying the pious inscriptions.

Charles Kennedy, in his sequencing of ceramic lamps, lists this family as Type 19.5 He expressed a dissatisfaction with Macalister's term "candlestick" lamp, and denies the possibility that the menorah decoration could be anything other than a palm branch since, he says, the form dates to the 6th century and there were already five centuries between Judaism and Christianity with a break too definitive to allow such borrowing. He attributes the difficulty in translation to the fact that Greek was falling into disuse and could not therefore be properly understood. He agrees with Edgar Smothers1 on the use of LUCHNARIA KALA as an advertisement used by the street merchants (this will be discussed further in a later chapter). He said that the phi was placed at the end of the inscription, showing that he did not recognize the splitting of this word (see Groups IIIa and IVa below). Like Florence Day he recognized the influence of the later language: "it may be possible that the Greek letters were 'breaking down' under the influence of the Arabic language prior to the Islamic Conquest in the seventh century. No satisfactory letter groupings have been discovered in these lamps using Safaitic forms, and it may well be a coincidence that the Greek and Safaitic forms are so similar."6

The last phrase quoted from Kennedy aptly ushers in the last and most recent group of writers: Sylvester Saller, Eugenia Nitowski, and Joseph Naveh.

Sylvester Saller in several short pages probably made the greatest contribution of all. In The Archaeological Setting of the Shrine of Bethphage, Saller discussed a form of lamp which was to become the terminus ad quem for the entire family. A lamp had been found at Bethphage which was a parallel to one found by Macalister at Gezer,3 which had a character

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4 Sellers and Baramki, p. 31.
7 Kennedy, p. 86.
CHAPTER II

LIGHT AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION

The Discipline of Secrecy

The early Christian Church of Syria-Palestine was in many ways a secret society, largely because it had to compete for adherents with flourishing Eastern mystery cults. Its secretive nature and sometimes exotic rites were meant to give the Christian a lifelong conversion experience.

The *Disciplina Arcani*, or discipline of secrecy, was more than the body of knowledge contained in the writings of the early church, it was the preparation and initiation into a lifestyle which manifested itself in its members. The Luchnaria were part of a mystical silence. The meaning of the inscriptions and symbolism were shruged to all but the believers, those who had passed through the arduous initiation of the catechumenate.

The catechumenate was divided into three phases, that of the "hearers" (*audiens*); the "applicants" (*competentes*), also called "kneelers," "chosen" (*electi*), or "destined for illumination" (*illuminiandī, photizomenoi*); and that of the newly baptized, the "illumined," "enlightened," the "faithful," or the "believers."

Those who wanted to become Christians were brought before the entire assembly of believers by sponsors and examined by teachers as to their reasons for embracing the faith. They then became hearers of the Gospel for a period as long as three years, in which time their sponsors were responsible for their conduct and religious education. At no time were the

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hearers allowed to take part in the Eucharist. They would usually stand in galleries and when the service had progressed to the point of the Eucharist they were put out of the church by the deacons and the doors were barred.\footnote{See the discussion in Thomas F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (London, 1971), pp. 125-129, 152, 171.} Besides the Gospel, the hearers were required to memorize the Lord's Prayer and the Jerusalem Creed, which were later recited before the assembly in periods known as the scrutinies. If one wished to prove himself a Christian before a strange community, the proof of his identity was the ability to recite the Lord's Prayer.\footnote{The Lord's prayer was the passport by which the early Christian identified himself around the ancient world, it was so secret that it was to have never been written down, see Appendix for Chapt. II.A (2).}

Those catechumens who had successfully fulfilled the three years of teaching were to undergo the more rigorous instruction in preparation for baptism as an applicant or kneeler. They were set apart from the other catechumens for the period of forty days before Easter, or Lent. It was during this time that the idea of secrecy and mystery took on a deeper, more realistic meaning. Long days were spent in instruction, prayer, frequent fasting, and intense scrutinies. Excitement was heightened at the prospect that a special, but unknown event was to take place at Easter.

During that week preceding Easter, discipline among the group was intensified until the fasting began for the Easter Vigil. It was at this point that the catechumen must have been totally confused and quite frightened, he had no idea of what was to happen, it was the great mystery which would make him a Christian and one with his Lord. Just before sunrise, the catechumens were taken apart from the assembly who had met to pray with them. Each catechumen was stripped entirely (in order by children, then women, and finally men, for the sake of modesty), they renounced Satan, then taken one by one to be first anointed with oil, exorcised, and immersed three times in the name of the Trinity, again anointed with oil, and finally received the laying on of hands by the bishop. All this in silence and darkness, without explanation or foreknowledge by the catechumen. Edward Yarnold fitly calls this the "awe-inspiring" or even "spine tingling rite of initiation,\footnote{Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century* (St. Paul Publications, 1973).} which must have practically frightened the catechumen to death, but most certainly made his conversion an experience remembered throughout his life. The newly enlightened were dressed in white robes, then taken from the darkness into the church and greeted with the brightness of a thousand lights: "You simply cannot imagine the number and sheer weight of the candles and the tapers and lamps and everything else they use for the services.\footnote{John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (London, 1971).} It was at this point that they were given a mixture of milk and honey\footnote{The milk and honey mixture, as well as being symbolic, provided a protective measure against the immediate effects of the eucharistic wine after long fasting.} before their first communion which was celebrated with the entire assembly. Later, these newly baptized were given a series of post-baptismal lectures, for those in Jerusalem, this was done around the edicule in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Light had a special meaning for more than just the catechumens in the early church, but nowhere was more reference made to it than in the initiatory rites. In his *Procatechesis*, St. Cyril of Jerusalem makes the statement, "You have walked in procession with the tapers of brides in your hands and the desire of heavenly citizenship in your hearts. . . ." to which Anthony Stephenson adds the note,
Apparently . . . at some ceremony following their registration, perhaps, in a formal entrance procession into the church for the opening lecture, the candidates carried lighted tapers or torches "a significant symbol both of the marriage of the soul with Christ, and of its enlightenment by faith" . . . and also of the heavenly teaching which, as illumined, they were about to receive.1

Torches are again referred to by Cyril in his Catechesis, "Guard unquenched in your hands the torches of faith you have just lighted. . . ."2 This seems somewhat reminiscent of the earlier warning found in the Didache, "Watch over your life: do not let your lamps go out. . . ."3

Coming predominately from tombs, there has been little stratigraphic context for the Lucchnera form of lamps. This causes uncertainty in dating and is the main reason for reliance on matching a proposed typology with the character of the early church to establish its proper context. In this respect, it is interesting to note two passages from the funeral orations of St. Gregory of Nazianzen which speak of light. First in speaking of St. Basil, he says, "a brilliant and celebrated light of the church, for he had been enrolled meanwhile in the sacred order of the priesthood to illumine. . . ."4 The second comes from the oration for his father, "we shall be . . . as little lights which dance about the great light."5 Finally in Homily 21 of Narsai, we have the statement, "In the door of the tomb of baptism . . . 2 Baptism represented death and resurrection,6 immersion three times symbolized the three days Christ spent in the tomb7 as well as the three Persons of the Trinity.8 After a candidate was baptized he was met with a great light from the lamps in the church. Perhaps death itself became a kind of baptism, and the little lamps which supplied not only a light for the burial attendants became a symbolic greeting for their resurrection to eternal life. Just as Christ, the Light will return from the East, the source of light, so the dead will be raised to face the East, the Light, the Christ.

Luchnicon

"And the lamps and candles are all lit, which make it very bright."9 By the 4th century the lighting of the lamps was a well established ceremony occurring every evening at about 4:00 p.m. throughout the week. The imagery of light as the representative of the divine presence was not a concept unique to the early church, nor even the New Testament, but is also evident in the Old Testament. A burning lamp was frequently the symbol for a living person, when the flame was snuffed out, the life was also ended (Proverbs 13:9, 20:20).

There are three sources which can be drawn on to reconstruct the lighting of the lamps: the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, dating to about A.D. 215, the


2Ibid., p. 91.


5Ibid., p. 155.


7Cyril, pp. 29, 31, 40.

8Ibid., pp. 29, 33.

9Ibid., pp. 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 41.

6Egeria 24:4.
Apostolic Constitutions of A.D. 375, and the late 4th century journal which the Spanish nun, Egeria, kept during her pilgrimage in the Holy Land. The account by Hippolytus, like that of the Apostolic Constitutions, are the most complete being written as manuals on rites for the church. Egeria, on the other hand, gives a description of the daily service as she actually saw it in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

The service, known as Luchnicon among Greek speaking Christians and Lucernare among the Latin, can be reconstructed in the following manner by combining the three sources (the Apostolic Tradition = H, the Apostolic Constitutions = A, and Egeria’s Journal = E):

BISHOP: stands in the midst of the believers. (H, E)

DEACON: brings in a lamp. (H)

BISHOP: "The Lord be with you all." (H)

PEOPLE: "And with your spirit." (H)

BISHOP: "Let us give thanks to the Lord." (H)

PEOPLE: "It is meet and right: majesty, exaltation, and glory are due to Him." (H)

BISHOP: "We give You thanks, O God, because You have enlightened us by revealing the incorruptible Light. So we, having finished the length of a day, and being come to the beginning of the night, satisfied with the light of the day that You have created for our salvation; and now, since by Your grace we lack not a light for the evening, we sanctify You and we glorify You, through Your only Son our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom be to You with Him glory and might and honor with the Holy Spirit, now and always and world without end." (H)

PEOPLE: "Amen." (H)

THE LUCHNARIA

Sing Psalms (H, E), especially Psalm 141 (A).¹

Supper (H).

DEACON (E): "All you faithful, let us pray to the Lord!

Save us, O God, and raise us up by Your Christ.

Let us stand up and beg for the mercies of the Lord and for His compassion, for an angel of peace, for all that is good and profitable for us, for a Christian departure out of this life, for a peaceful evening and a night free from sin;

and let us ask that the whole course of our life be without blame.

Let us dedicate ourselves and one another to the living God through His Christ." (A)

BISHOP (E): "O God, You are without beginning and without end, the Maker of the whole world through Christ and His Provider, but above all You are His God and Father, the Giver of the Spirit and the King of the intelligible and sensible beings. You made the day for the works of light and the night for the refreshment of our weakness--for Yours is the day and Yours is the night; it was You who appointed the light and the sun. Lord and Friend of the human race, Fountain of all good, mercifully accept our evening sacrifice of praise. As You have conducted us through the day and brought us to night's beginning, keep us now in Christ, grant us a peaceful evening and a night free from sin and bring us to everlasting life through Christ our Lord. Through Him we offer You glory, honor, and worship in the Holy Spirit for ever." (A)

¹The Phos Hilaron may also be added here, see the discussion in Chapter III, A under (9) Luchnaria Kala.
PEOPLE: "Amen." (A)
DEACON: "Bow down for the laying on of hands." (A, E)
BISHOP: "O God of our fathers and Lord of mercy, of Your wisdom You made us rational creatures and You love us more than anything else on the face of the earth. You gave us authority over all other creatures on earth and ordained kings and priests for us—the former for the security of this present life, the latter for regular worship—look down upon us now, Lord Almighty, and let Your face shine upon your people who bow their hearts before You, and bless them by Christ; through Him You have enlightened us with the Light of knowledge and have revealed Yourself to us; with Christ, worthy adoration is due from every rational and holy nature to You and to the Spirit, the Paraclete, for ever." (A)
PEOPLE: "Amen." (A)
DEACON: "Depart in peace." (A)

It was at this point that the thumb was dipped into the oil of the lamp and the forehead was sealed with the sign of the cross.

CHAPTER III

THE LUCHNARIA

The Inscriptions

Because of the severe lack of stratigraphic contexts for the lamps, the inscriptions themselves become the key to dating and the criteria for forming the typology. The inscriptions have always tantalized scholars, but views which were too simplistic blinded any other interpretation of their meanings and sequencing. No one ever gathered all the available inscriptions and compared them, no one ever tried to reverse the form evolution, the history of the Church was not consulted, generalized statements about the break between Christianity and Judaism were naive, and little was suggested as to a mixture of languages with the Greek.

The most obvious place to begin is with comparative charts of the inscriptions. Such a chart was published only once and in a highly abbreviated form by Macalister:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\phi \omega \chi \bar{\upsilon} \phi \epsilon \nu \tau \dot{\iota} \alpha \iota \iota \\
\phi \omega \chi \psi \chi \gamma \eta \nu \psi \varepsilon \nu \iota \iota \\
\theta \iota \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu \eta \theta \omicron \iota \\
\chi \omicron \kappa \omicron \alpha \nu \omicron \nu \omicron \omicron \nu \omicron \\
\theta \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \\
\end{array}
\]

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1Macalister, Gezer, Vol. II, p. 228, Fig. 379.
It presents a number of obvious problems: (1) the sequence was made after Macalister had already formed his opinion that there was a degenerating typology, his conclusion about the form's evolution was not taken from the chart; (2) he omitted parts of the inscriptions; (3) he has ignored the nozzle designs as being important in the determination of the typology; and (4) he has mis-split the texts and misunderstood the direction in which they are to be read.

If one takes all the inscriptions available and copies out the texts and divides them by the formulae, one immediately notices the similarities and patterns in the inscriptions. The random, ignorant, unintelligent copying theory must be dropped at once. There are strong dissimilarities between different formulae, but within each formula the similarities in letter formation among lamps from various locations in Palestine are too great to be dismissed as illiterate copying.

As one scans Charts I to XI, it can be seen that the letters in each group follow definite patterns. If potters, each in different villages, were able to copy "distorted" inscriptions with accuracy, it would follow that they would be just as capable in copying clear inscriptions without error. The misformed letters in each group are always the same. The Charts do not reflect textual evolution or sequencing, but illustrate the similarities of letters within groups of formulae, and have been written out in the direction in which they are properly read. Those characters which deserve special notice are:

Chart I. The v-shaped nu and the ligature of sigma and iota.
Chart II. The v-shaped nu, doubled alpha, and ligature of sigma and iota.
Chart III. The "open" phi (shaped like an omega), the nu formed like a lower case h, the ligature of sigma and iota, and the remaining characters to be discussed later.
Chart IV. The elongated ligature.
Chart V. The reversed nu, the unusual pi, and alpha.

Chart VII. The upside-down omega in place of an upsilon, and the alpha.
Chart VIII. The upside-down omega and upsilon.
Chart IX. The reversed epsilon and elongated pi.
Chart XI. The "open" (omega-shaped) phi.

The abbreviations are:

Chart I. The X for Χριστός.
Chart II. The XY for Χριστός.
Chart III. The XY for Χριστός and currently unknown form at the end of the formula.¹
Chart IV. The XY for Χριστός, with most of the text currently untranslatable.
Chart V. The XY for Χριστός and ΙΩ for Ιησοῦς.
Chart IX. The XY for Χριστός.
Chart X. The XY for Χριστός.
Chart XI. The XY for Χριστός, ΚΟΥ for Κυρίου, ΔΟΥ for δούλος, and a shortened form for allah.

One of the greatest mistakes made in the study of the inscriptions has been the misunderstanding of how or in what direction the texts are to be read. When incorrectly read, letters seem upside-down and more confusion, than is actually present, appears. There are five ways to read the inscriptions: (1) clockwise, from right to left, without turning the lamp; (2) counter-clockwise, right to left, without turning the lamp; (3) counter-clockwise, left to right, without turning the lamp; (4) counter-clockwise, left to right, turning the lamp; and (5) clockwise, left to right, turning the lamp. (See illustrations 1 to 5.) The direction of the reading becomes very important in setting the typology. McCown, like many others, had no idea of the direction of the readings when he made the statement, "... the maker of the mold turned some of the letters upside down or half way over and mistook others."²

The lamp which he refers to is in Group IIIb, Script

²Ibid., p. 173.
Chart III, and falls under those lamps which are read counter-clockwise while the lamp is *not* turned (ill. 2), thus none of the letters are upside down and those "half way over" are merely an attempt to keep them all as upright as possible.

It has been only in the most recent years that words from languages other than Greek have been recognized on the lamps. The first to be found was the Arabic word *Allah* by Father Sylvester Saller.\(^1\) Florence Day\(^2\) and Charles Kennedy\(^3\) had earlier expressed the resemblance of the "unintelligible" Greek with the Safaitic alphabet and the possibility "that the Greek letters were 'breaking down' under the influence of the Arabic language prior to the Islamic Conquest in the seventh century."\(^4\) Day pointed out that the simultaneous use of Greek and Arabic was characteristic of the Umayyad period and that the official language of the State registers was not changed completely to Arabic until 'Abd al-Malik in A.D. 700-701.\(^5\) So the precedent existed. Day, however, did not recognize that any of the Luchnaria had been found with Arabic inscriptions.\(^6\)

In 1976, Joseph Naveh published an article on a new Group in the family that used Syriac exclusively.\(^7\) Syriac was used by the church in Jerusalem until the end of the fourth century, but according to Egeria, it was not the dominant language and seemed to be fading.

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\(^2\)Day, pp. 64-79.

\(^3\)Kennedy, pp. 67-115.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 86.

\(^5\)Day, p. 70.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 77.

\(^7\)Naveh, pp. 102-104.
CHART VIII

. Thebeot Wk0λ
. Thebeotmk0λ
. Thebeotmk0λ
. Thebeo

CHART IX

. Φωτιθφέμακληκαλ+
. Φωτιτθφέμακληκαλ+
. Φωτιτθφέμακληκαλ+
. Φωτίηκαλ+
CHART X

1. ὁ ὁμήρου πατάκιν θαλάσση
2. ὁ ὁμήρου πατάκιν θαλάσση
3. ὁ ὁμήρου πατάκιν θαλάσση
4. ὁ ὁμήρου πατάκιν θαλάσση
5. ὁ ὁμήρου πατάκιν θαλάσση
6. ὁ ὁμήρου πατάκιν θαλάσση

CHART XI

1. ἦλθα γι' αυτόν εν άγωγόν
2. ἦλθα γι' αυτόν εν άγωγόν
3. ἦλθα γι' αυτόν εν άγωγόν
4. ἦλθα γι' αυτόν εν άγωγόν
1. Inscription read clockwise, right to left, without turning the lamp. Groups IIIa, IIIe, IVa, IVb.

2. Inscription read counter clockwise, right to left, without turning the lamp. Groups IIIb, IIIc, IIId.

3. Inscription read counter clockwise, left to right, without turning the lamp. Groups Va, IX.

4. Inscription read counter clockwise, left to right, turning the lamp. Groups Vb, VIa, VIb, VIc, VII, VIII.

5. Inscription read clockwise, left to right, turning the lamp. Groups X, XI, XII.
In this province there are some people who know both Greek and Syriac, but others know only one or the other. The bishop may know Syriac, but he never uses it. He always speaks in Greek, and has a presbyter beside him who translates the Greek into Syriac, so that everyone can understand what he means. Similarly the lessons read in church have to be read in Greek, but there is always someone in attendance to translate into Syriac so that the people understand. Of course there are also people here who speak neither Greek nor Syriac, but Latin. But there is no need for them to be discouraged, since some of the brothers or sisters who speak Latin as well as Greek will explain things to them.¹

The Syriac is a form dating to the fourth century, while the Arabic begins with the late seventh/early eighth, thus the beginning and end of the Luchnaria.

There are eleven formulae to be found among the lamp inscriptions, some only a variation by the the insertion of an abbreviation, others are as yet untranslatable. Numbers 1 to 7, 9 to 11 always contain the menorah on the nozzle, while 7 and 8 contain the cross.

(1) The first to be considered is the earliest inscription, which is in Syriac, MPRWS. Joseph Naveh has suggested that its meaning is similar to the phrase, "the light of Christ shines for all" and is interpreted with the meaning to "spread" or "disperse" light.² This is not only the earliest of the inscriptions, but by far the shortest. It is written in Syro-Palestinian script. The use of Syriac should not be deemed unusual since the Syrian church was quite strong as is evidenced by the force exerted by the Apostolic Constitutions. See Group I.

¹Egeria, 47:3-4.
²Naveh, p. 104.
(2) The next formula is the most "primitive" of the Greek inscriptions. The form has always been referred to as totally unintelligible, meaning that it is distorted into an unreadable form because of ignorance. Most of the eleven formulae contain abbreviations, it is possible that this group is so highly abbreviated that it cannot be read, which is not to say that they do not have meaning, we simply do not understand it at this time. See Group II.

(3) Since the phrase, "The light of Christ shines for all" is the most popular of all the formulae and is the one which contains the most variations, it will be treated separately below. It is this inscription which expresses the full meaning of all the symbolism of the lamps. Christ is the light, the lamps give light, the menorah which is always with this formula is the symbol of light and in turn Christ. See Groups IIIa, IIIe, IVa, IVb, Va, Vb.

(4) The first variation on the "phos Christou" formula is shown in Group IIIb. The first element "phos Christou phenei pacin" is readable, but a final character group is still unrecognizable. McCown has suggested that it is "ε[ν] ω[η]" meaning "in the home."1 For lack of a better interpretation, this translation must suffice for now.

(5) The formula of Group IIIc contains one of the most unusual characters of all, which appears to be more than a ligature of the first and last letters of pheni and pacin. Nevertheless, it falls into the category of the "phos Christou" type.

(6) The next variation contains the simple addition of the abbreviation IC for Jesus, and can be translated as, "The light of Christ Jesus shines for all." See Group IIIId.

(7) "The light of Christ shines beautifully for all" may be accompanied by either the menorah or cross on the nozzle. It is with this variation that the phos Christou formula becomes clearly readable. It is also with this form that the inscription is read from left to right rather than right to left as in all those which precede it. The final word ΚΑΛΗ in ΦΩΣ ΧΥ ΦΕΝΙ ΠΑΣΙΝ ΚΑΛΗ has been a source of debate. Many are of the opinion the ΚΑΛΗ was taken from the inscription ΛΥΧΝΑΡΙΑ ΚΑΛΑ, "beautiful little lamps" (Groups VIa-VIC) and meant to complete the text, "the light of Christ shines for all, fine (lamp)."2 However, this seems a rather unsatisfactory explanation. Although ΚΑΛΗ is ordinarily an adjective, it is justified to use it as an adverb, because at times predicate adjectives ending in an eta were used adverbially. It is possible that this is what was intended by the makers of these lamps to read, "the light of Christ shines beautifully for all." See Groups IX to XI.

(8) "The light of Christ the Lord shines for the servant of God." The longest, both in number of words and use of abbreviations, and the last in the line of phos Christou inscription. It is important also because of its use of the Arabic word for God, allah. Along with the Syriac inscription, this is the rarest of all. This form, although originally reported by Macalister, was totally misunderstood by him. It was Sylvester Saller who was the first to recognize the "unknown" word. Group XII.

(9) One of the most interesting and equally misunderstood of the formulae is that of luchnaria kala, "beautiful little lamps." Up to the present, the only explanation which has been accepted is that of Edgar

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1See Kennedy, pp. 85, 86; Saller, Excavations at Bethany (Jerusalem, 1957), p. 176; Sellers and Baramki, p. 47.


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R. Smothers, who explains it as, what "the vendor of lamps would have cried (it) in the streets as he made his rounds." Saller thought of it as did Smothers, as meaning "fine lamp," while Kennedy also agreed with Smothers.

The most reasonable of explanations can be found in an article about an early Christian prayer by Robert Taft:

Pagans were accustomed to greet the light with exclamation "Khaire, phos agathon" ("Hail, good light!") or "Khaire, phos philon" ("Hail, friendly light!"). And Clement of Alexandria recommends that we greet the true God with "Hail, light!" So even before the development of evening into a liturgical office held in church, Christian domestic piety had inherited from paganism the lucemarium, the practice of greeting the evening lamp with prayer and praise.

He also points out the great lamp-lighting hymn of thanks cited by St. Basil (+379), the ancient Phos hilaron:

O radiant Light, O Sun divine
Of God the Father's deathless face,
O image of the light sublime
That fills the heavenly dwelling place.

Lord Jesus Christ, as daylight fades,
As shine the lights of eventide,
We praise the Father with the Son,
The Spirit blest and with them one.

O Son of God, the source of life

1Smothers, pp. 46, 49.
2Saller, Bethany, p. 176.
3Kennedy, p. 85-86.
5Ibid., p. 38, see this Appendix under Chapter III, A.

THE LUCHNARIA

Praise is your due by night and day
Unsullied lips must raise the strain
Of your proclaimed and splendid name.

Taft adds:

Basil says that the hymn was ancient even in his time—so old that he did not even know who wrote it.

It seemed fitting to our fathers not to receive the gift of the evening light in silence, but to give thanks immediately upon its appearance. We can't say who was the father of the words of the thanksgiving for the light. But the people utter the ancient formula, and those that say, "We praise the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit of God" were never thought impious by anyone.

See Groups VIa-VIc.

(10) "St. Elias," perhaps its importance to the lamps is that Elias or Elijah was equated with John the Baptist, the herald of Christ, the Light. No variation is evident in this text, only in the letters themselves. Group VII.

(11) "The Mother of God," θεοτόκος, literally, "Bearer of God." Predominately a 5th century expression, it was a phrase used by Alexander of Alexandria, Athenasius, Apollinaris, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria. It was not used by the School of Antioch. And Theodore of Mopsuestia would use it only when carefully guarded. It was a term frequently used in Constantinople. However, Nestorius, patriarch of that city, would not use it, his greatest enemy being Cyril of Alexandria. Group VIII.

2Taft, p. 40.
The Evidence for Classification

**Typology.** The evidence of typological sequence is dependent upon (1) inscription length, (2) inscription language, (3) direction of reading, (4) symbolism of nozzle design, and (5) the development of the nature of the Church. Close attention should be given to the "Proposed Typology Chart" for the following.

(1) **Inscription length.** The proposed typology is based on the assumption that the shortest inscription is first and progresses to the longest, following one of the axioms of textual criticism, that the shorter of the readings usually is the more original. The length of these texts is built by the addition of words and/or abbreviations, evident only in the mainstream formula of Phos Christou.

(2) **Inscription language.** The use of Syriac and Arabic in the inscriptions is the most important factor for setting the proper classification, dating, and sequence for the typology. The Syriac form, according to Naveh, must indeed be fourth century. It stands alone, never being mixed with Greek or any other language. The Arabic intrusion, on the other hand, which is always found mixed with Greek, could not be earlier than the seventh century. The Arabic, like the Syriac, but unlike the Greek, shows no development, either in text or letter formation. Each case is rare, which could be expected in forms used at the beginning and end of a family evolution.

(3) **Direction of reading.** The direction in which the inscription is read is coupled with a "flip" in the direction the lamp is to be held for reading. The "flip" occurs between Groups IIIa and IX, and Groups IVa and Va. The earliest lamps are read with the nozzle pointing to the right, the inscription read right to left, counter-clockwise, without turning the lamp. These are the most distorted inscriptions. The longer, clearer inscriptions begin at the "flip" with the nozzle pointing left and the inscription read from left to right, clockwise (except Group IX, which although left to right is still read counter-clockwise).
Classification

Evidence of typological sequence is (1) inscription length, (2) inscription location of reading, (4) symbolism of the development of the nature the attention should be given to the Chart for the following.

Length. The proposed typology is that the shortest inscription to the longest, following one of criticism, that the shorter of the one more original. The length of by the addition of words and/or only in the mainstream formula

Language. The use of Syriac and formations is the most important factor in classification, dating, and sequence. The Syriac form, according be fourth century. It stands mixed with Greek or any otheronic intrusion, on the other hand, mixed with Greek, could not be a fourth century. The Arabic, like the Greek, shows no development, or formation. Each case is rare, in forms used at the begin-

reading. The direction in which is coupled with a "flip" in the is to be held for reading. The Groups III, and IX, and Groups earliest lamps are read with the right, the inscription read right wise, without turning the lamp. distorted inscriptions. The longer, begin at the "flip" with the nozzle the inscription read from left to right Group IX, which although left clock-wise).
(4) Decorations on the nozzle. The two common designs found on the nozzle are the candlestick and the Byzantine cross. The candlestick or menorah will change style in several ways. There is the very simple form with seven branches, or the branches may vary in number from five to eleven, some being connected to the center stem while others are not.\(^1\) The candlestick may or may not be connected to the ring around the filling hole, and may also have a tripod base which has either curved or straight legs.\(^2\) Partly because of

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\(^1\)See, for menorahs depicted on lamps with more or less than seven branches, the following: Y. Aharoni, "Excavations at Ramat Rahel," IEJ, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 108, Fig. 4:1, for an eight-branched type, not connected to the wick hole; S. A. S. Hussein, "A Rock-cut Tomb-chamber at 'Ain Yabrud," QDAP, Vol. VI, No. 1, Pl. 7:2, 6, for the nine-branched type not connected to the wick or filling holes, and six-branched type not connected to the stem, or wick and filling holes; Kennedy, Pl. 26:658, 659, 702, three lamps each with nine branches; Macalister, Gezer, Vol. III, eight-branched candlestick not connected with the ring surrounding the wick hole, Pl. 77:13; Pl. 104:1, 3 shows two lamps each with five unconnected branches, and Pl. 188:8, 4 and 3 give five, nine, and eleven branched types respectively; McCown, Vol. 1, Pl. 40:2, 41:12, 42:6, all eight-branched; Saller, Bethany, nine-branched types are seen on p. 53, Fig. 16:1, 4, and p. 54, Fig. 17:4, not connected to the wick hole; Sellers, p. 43, Fig. 5 shows one lamp with nine branches; Sellers and Baramki, five-branched type on p. 53, and the nine-branched type on pp. 48, 49, 51, 53; J. C. Wampler, Tell en-Nasbeh, Vol. 2, (New Haven, 1947), Vol. 2, Pl. 73:1666, ten-branched. Another type need only be mentioned here. It is an eight-branched palm-menorah not connected to the wick hole, but there is a circle connected at the top of the center stem. See McCown, Vol. I, Pl. 42:9, 14; and Wampler, Vol. 2, Pl. 73:1668.

\(^2\)Aharoni, IEJ, p. 108, Fig. 14:1, tripod base with straight legs; Aharoni, Ramat Rahel 1961-62, Fig. 10:4, tripod with straight legs, and Fig. 25:1, curved legs not connected to the filling hole; G. W. Crowfoot and G. M. Fitzgerald, "Excavations
its varied style and partly because it is sometimes accompanied by a Christian inscription, this design is said to be a palm branch and not a candlestick or menorah. It is said that Christianity had too long been separated from Judaism to show any of the blending common in the Apostolic church. The menorah, it is said, was not a Christian symbol and, being so Jewish, would not have been used on Christian lamps. The menorah was the symbol of light and light was the symbol of Christ. The menorah to the Jews was the symbol of the afterlife—Christ was the future life. This problem is still not solved, and it is no more supportable to call the design a palm branch as it is to call it a menorah, for the following reasons. First, the fact that the design has more or less than seven branches is no proof that it is not Jewish. This has been pointed out by Goodenough:

The number of branches can by no means be taken as a criterion, for unmistakable menorahs have a varying number of branches. . . . I always feel that we are closer to rabbinic Judaism when the number is not seven, because of the rabbinic

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in the Tyropoeon Valley, Jerusalem," APEF, Vol. V, Pl. 17:31, 35, both have straight legs; E. R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbolism in the Graeco-Roman Period, Vol. 3 (New York, 1953), Fig. 338, straight legs; R. W. Hamilton, "Excavations Against the North Wall, Jerusalem," QDAP, Vol. X (1940), Pl. 42, straight legs; Hussein, QDAP, Pls. 7:9 and 8:2-4, tripods with straight legs, not connected to the filling hole; Macalister, Gezer, Vol. 3, Pl. 77:13, straight tripod legs not connected to the filling hole; Pl. 188:1 and 5, two examples of curved tripod legs, one not connected to the filling hole, while the other is connected; McCown, Vol. 1, Pl. 40:3, 6, straight legs; B. Mazar, The Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem (Jerusalem, 1969), Pl. 13, B4, straight legs; Sellers, p. 42, Fig. 1, curved legs not connected to the filling hole.

1See the discussion by Kennedy, pp. 83-85.


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prohibition against reproducing articles from the Temple.

Second, some of these, as has already been noted, have tripod bases. They are distinctive parts of the design on many menorahs, and cannot be considered parts of palm branches. It may therefore be safe to strike a compromise and use the term which Goodenough applied to such designs, calling them "palm-menorahs." If a design shows merely branches, the term palm-menorah seems most suitable, but if the design contains a tripod base it seems to me that it should be called a menorah.

The Byzantine cross likewise shows style changes. It may be the ordinary type which consists of two intersecting bars with arms of equal length flaring at the ends. Another type of cross is formed by four nearly equilateral triangles, whose apexes meet at the center without being connected. Somewhat similar to

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1Goodenough, Vol. 1, p. 158.


3Aharoni, Ramat Rahel 1961-62, Fig. 26:9; J. W. Crowfoot; G. W. Crowfoot, and K. M. Kenyon, The Objects from Samaria (London, 1957), p. 375, Fig. 89:5; J. W. Crowfoot and G. M. Fitzgerald, APEF, Pl. 17:24; Hamilton, QDAP, Pl. 42; Hussein, QDAP, Pl. 7:1, 3, 5, 7; Pl. 8:7, 10, No. 7, shows two crosses on each side of a palm-menorah; Kennedy, Pl. 25:631, 640; on No. 631 there are two crosses on each side of a nine-branched palm-menorah; Macalister, Gezer, Vol. 3, Pls. 77:2, 3, 5, 14, 113:5; 118:12; McCown, Vol. 1, Pls. 40:8, 9, 11, 15; 41:7, 11, 14, 15-18; 42:3, 5, 7, 16, 17; Saller, Bethany, p. 53, Fig. 16:3, 7-9; p. 54, Fig. 17:4, two palm-menorahs on each side of the cross; Sellers and Baramki, BASOR SUP, p. 50, Fig. 54; Wampler, Vol. 2, Pls. 72:1661, 1662; 73:1664, 1671, 1673, 1676.

4McCown, Vol. 1, Pls. 40:12, 13; 41:6; Saller, Bethany, p. 53, Fig. 16:10; Wampler, Vol. 2, Pl. 73:1667, 1669.
this is a design consisting of a St. Andrew's cross made of double lines.\(^1\) And the final of the four common design types consists of a cross of two intersecting bars of equal length with a single circle attached to the ends of the two bars.\(^2\)

If we are to believe that the clear inscriptions preceded the distorted ones, in time, it would mean that the designs would change from a Byzantine cross (Groups XI-XII), to a menorah (Group X), and would end with a palm-menorah (Groups I to IX). This would seem strange. If these lamps are Christian as everyone believes, why would Christians give up the cross for a menorah or a palm-menorah on their lamps? But if we start with the distorted inscriptions first and work through to the clear, the design would change from the palm-menorah or menorah (Groups I to IX) to the Byzantine cross (Groups XI-XII).

(5) The development of the nature of the Church. If ignorance is not the reason for the distortion in the inscriptions, but rather, the secretive nature of the Church, this too must be an evidence for setting the typology. The disciplina arcani, or discipline of secrecy, so dominant in the early fourth century is the clearest explanation for the distortions of the texts. The start of the secrecy was during the time of Hippolytus, the height was reached in the forth century, a slight decline in the fifth, the ending in the sixth, and by the seventh all remnants are gone, except in Constantinople (as seem in the writings of Maximus). The extent of this nature is illustrated by considering some of the prominent authors, their dates, and their spheres of influence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD 200</td>
<td>Tertullian</td>
<td>North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>215 Hippolytus</td>
<td>Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350</td>
<td>Cyril of Jerusalem</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^2\)Saller, *Bethany*, p. 53, Fig. 16:14.

375 Apostolic Constitutions Syria
383 Theodore of Mopsuestia Syria
384 Egeria Jerusalem/Spain
390 Ambrose Milan
397 John Chrysostom Antioch
400 Augustine North Africa
500 John the Deacon Rome
630 Maximus the Confessor Constantinople

The end did not come abruptly; as the knowledge of Christianity spread, the secrecy faded. The reason for its continuance to the seventh century in the East has been suggested in the following way:

Perhaps it was Constantinople’s foreign population of merchants, diplomats, and travellers—often from non-Christian nations—that explains the perpetuation of the catechumenate in the capital long after it had disappeared elsewhere.\(^1\)

For the most part, they began running out of adults, and with the start of infant baptism, the elaborate system of the discipline and instruction of candidates became meaningless. The two appropriate ends can be seen in ca. A.D. 200 with Tertullian, "... let them be made Christians when they have become competent to know Christ. ... With no less reason ought the unmarried also to be delayed until they either marry or are firmly established in continence."\(^6\) And on the other hand, John the Deacon of Rome who speaks exclusively of infant baptism by ca. A.D. 500.\(^3\) He even expresses a lack of understanding as to why certain elements exist in the ceremony, the reason for initiatory rites which had applied to adults had by this time been lost.

With secrecy gone there was no reason to distort the texts any longer, slowly the inscriptions clear until

\(^1\)Matthews, p. 46.
\(^2\)Whitaker, p. 9.
\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 154-158.
the addition of the Arabic which marked the end of the family. Even though Christianity was no longer persecuted after the rise of Constantine, paganism was by no means finished, the two co-existed for several centuries. It was not until the sixth century that Christianity gained dominance. With the invasion of Islam into Syria-Palestine in the seventh century, Christianity was no longer the dominant religion. Although tolerated by Islam, it was almost like the pre-Constantinian period, its character was changed to accommodate this for survival’s sake.

**Dating.** Only a very few of these lamps can be accurately dated on the basis of the provenience as coming from well stratified excavations. Usually only general dates are given in reports, such as “5th or 6th century;” this provides little help to determine the sequence of the variations. At Ramat Rahel, inscribed as well as radiated-type lamps are dated to the sixth and seventh centuries. At Tell Ḫesbân, two of the radiated-type lamps have been assigned specifically to the Umayyad period, 661-750. The many lamps found in a tomb at el Bassa were dated to ca. 396, from coins that were found with them. However, caution should be used with regard to this find as well as all other tombs, because they were often used for several centuries and the task of determining just what objects were placed in the tomb at the same time is often quite impossible. As to paleographical dating, some help comes from Jerash, by the many datable inscriptions discovered there. But again the closest dates arrived at are generalized to the fifth and sixth centu-

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**The Luchnaria**

Abbreviations, four of which are represented on these lamps, are also datable. The most helpful of the four is IC, which has been given the earliest possible date of 524/533. By this evidence, along with the previous discussion of the Syriac and Arabic, the safest time period which can be set for this family is from the early fourth to the early eight centuries.

**Description of the Typological Chart.** Combining all of the above with several more features, the proposed Typological Chart will be seen as the most logical.

**Group I.** Nozzle pointing up with seven-branched menorah design, a single word in Syriac, read right to left.

**Group II.** Nozzle pointing to the right with seven-branched menorah, currently unreadable Greek text, probably all abbreviations, sometimes accompanied by the earliest form the symbol #.

**Group IIIa.** Nozzle pointing to the right with five-branched menorah, first intelligible Greek text, read right to left, clockwise, without turning the lamp. Contains one abbreviation (XY), and "open" phi in phos, which is split on each side of the nozzle, and a doubling of the small case alpha in pacin. The # symbol is used on each side of the menorah.

**Group IIIb.** Nozzle pointing to the right with seven-branched menorah. Intelligible Greek text read right to left, counter-clockwise, without turning the lamp. Contains one abbreviation (XY), and an added element at the end which is at present debatable in translation. The phi of phos is both open in some forms and closed in others. The nu of phenei is

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2M. Avi-Yonah, "Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions," *QDAP* Supplement to Vol. IX, pp. 29 and 73.
shaped like a small h, the alpha is capitalized. The "flip" in reading direction begins here.

Group IIIc. Nozzle pointing to the right with seven-branched menorah. The Greek is read right to left, counter-clockwise, without turning the lamp. Most of the text is currently unreadable, especially the letter group ση. The alpha is capitalized.

Group IIId. Nozzle pointing right with seven-branched menorah. The Greek text is read from right to left, counter-clockwise, without turning the lamp. Two abbreviations are present (XY, IC). The nu is a capital that is reversed and there is a small case alpha. The pi is always in the unusual shape ȝ.

Group IIIe. Nozzle pointing right with five-branched menorah. Highly distorted Greek text reading from right to left, clockwise. Contains one abbreviation (XY). The symbol ἴ has been replaced by ơ. This Group seems to be current with Group IIIa (especially because of the number of branches in the menorah).

Group IVa. Nozzle pointing right with seven-branched menorah. The Greek text is distorted, but readable, containing one abbreviation (XY). The text is read from right to left, clockwise, without turning the lamp. The symbol ἴ is used on each side of the menorah. The small case alpha is doubled in pi and the word phos is split on each side of the nozzle. Seems to be in direct line with Group IIIa.

Group IVb. Nozzle pointing right with seven-branched menorah. The Greek inscription is read right to left, clockwise, without turning the lamp. Contains one abbreviation (XY).

Group Va. Direction "flip." Nozzle pointing left with seven-branched menorah. The Greek inscription is read left to right, counter-clockwise, without turning the lamp. The symbol ἴ is on each side of the menorah. There is one abbreviation (XY). There is a division of phos and a small case alpha.

Group Vb. Nozzle pointing left with seven-branched menorah. The Greek inscription is read left to right, counter-clockwise, turning the lamp. The nu is reversed and the alpha is in the small case. This definitely becomes a dead end.

Group VIa. Nozzle pointing left with unknown-branched menorah. Contains a distorted, but readable Greek text, with the ἴ symbol at the beginning and on only one side. Reversible text, read left to right or right to left.

Group VIb. Nozzle pointing left with seven-branched menorah. A slightly disorted Greek text read left to right, counter-clockwise, turning the lamp. It contains an open rho, reversed nu, inverted upsilon, and small case alpha.

Group VIc. Nozzle pointing left with seven-branched menorah. A clear Greek text which is read from left to right, counter-clockwise, turning the lamp. The nu is reversed, the rho is open, the lambda is inverted, and the small case alpha is used.

Group VII. Nozzle pointing left with seven-branched menorah. The Greek text is read from left to right, counter-clockwise, turning the lamp. It uses an inverted omega in place of an upsilon, and the alpha is in the small case.

Group VIII. Nozzle pointing left with seven-branched menorah. A clear Greek inscription read from left to right, counter-clockwise, turning the lamp. An inverted omega has been used in place of omicron and there is an inverted upsilon.

Group IX. At the "flip" point. Nozzle pointing left with a nine-branched menorah. A readable Greek text, left to right, counter-clockwise, without turning the lamp. One abbreviation is used (XY). The pi has four "legs." Like Group X, it has more than seven branches in the menorah. There is a small cross at the end of the inscription.

Group X. Nozzle pointing left with nine-branched menorah which has a tripod base. A clear Greek inscription read left to right, clockwise, without turning the lamp. It contains one abbreviation (XY).