

Heather Jackson

TERRACOTTA LAMPS OF A HELLENISTIC HOUSING INSULA AT JEBEL KHALID, NORTH SYRIA*

Introduction

The site of Jebel Khalid, ancient name unknown, lies on the west bank of the river Euphrates, not far north of the headwaters of Lake Assad. This large limestone outcrop was the site chosen for a Seleucid military settlement in the early 3rd century BC, and probably protecting a river crossing. The whole mountain, except on the eastern river side was fortified by a great Circuit Wall, strengthened by as many as 28 towers. The length of the wall on the landward side was about 4 kilometres; on the east the steep cliffs above the river provided sufficient deterrent. The more southerly peak, the Akropolis, was also fortified, and within that fortification wall has been excavated a very large building, thought to be a palace and/or central administrative building. In the saddle between the two peaks was the site of the Main Gate, with stone-paved roadway and massive towers on either side, on the lines of the Main Gate at Dura-Europos. From the Akropolis, looking north, one can see the ground lines of the Domestic Quarter, with its grid lines of streets and insulae. This large site has been excavated since 1987 by an Australian team from The Australian National University at Canberra and the University of Melbourne.¹ Only one of the insulae has been partially excavated.²

There appear to be two levels of Hellenistic occupation. The evidence of the coins and stamped amphora handles suggest the following:

*Phase A: 310–160 BC, with the greatest incidence 225–164.
Phase B: 150–75 BC, with the greatest incidence 125–75.*

The site is particularly important because there was no subsequent Roman occupation. There is some evidence of a brief settlement on the Akropolis in the 4th century AD and coin evidence of some Byzantine/Early Islamic settlement in the 6th/7th centuries AD.

This paper presents a brief typology of the lamp fragments excavated so far in the housing insula and raises some questions. Over 150 lamp fragments were excavated. A fuller discussion and complete catalogue will be presented in a forthcoming publication.

Typology

Hellenistic lamps from Syria are not well documented. Waagé's account of the lamps from Antioch is by far the best source, but this is an old publication which does not publish profiles.³

The following typology is based on shape and style of decoration. The fabrics, which await analysis together with the site pottery fabrics, are only mentioned at this stage if they differ from the commonest fabric occurring at the site: a micaceous fabric, with frequent white and gray inclusions, firing usually to a brown-pink color Munsell 2.5YR 6/4.⁴ The term black- or red-'glazed' has been avoided because

of the confusion this may generate with the use of genuine vitreous glaze on so-called 'Parthian' green-glazed ware. The number in brackets at the end of each description indicates the number of identifiable fragments of each type.

Type 1: Wheel-made; round-bodied with lustrous black slip. c.275–200 BC (fig. 1,1–3).

These are all related to Howland Type 25B. The Jebel Khalid type has a flat-topped nozzle with steep sides, well articulated, and a nozzle tip which is rounded or blunt/round. The applied side lugs are solid rather than pierced, a feature which Howland regards as later, together with thinner walls, lighter bases and deteriorating slip.⁵ However, the Jebel Khalid lamps of Type 1 have thick walls and floor in spite of the unpierced lug. A date which extends later than the Howland Type 25B range seems appropriate i.e. from the beginning to the mid-3rd century and perhaps a little later. The pink/buff fabric is finely levigated and the slip either lustrous or semi-lustrous. It is probable that these lamps are imported. (13 fragments).

Type 2: Wheel-made; round-bodied with matt (2.1), or no slip (2.2). c.250–200 BC.

These may be local imitations of the black- or red-slipped Type 1. They are all manufactured from fabric which resembles the local fabric. On the whole they are less carefully made than Type 1, and the slip (usually red) is weak and matt. The profile is less sharply articulated, although the nozzle tops remain flat with steep sides. (5 fragments).

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¹ For more detailed information on the site and early campaigns, see G. W. Clarke/P. J. Connor, *Jebel Khalid in North Syria: the First Campaigns*. *Mediterranean Arch.* 9/10, 1996/97, 151–183.

² The insula faces south, measures 35 x 90 m, contains two large cisterns and a mysterious rock-cut basin. Walls are stone, finished on the interior with painted plaster. The insula is the subject of the author's PhD dissertation.

³ Waagé 1941. — Relevant also are the sites of Dura-Europos (Baur 1947), Oumm el-'Amad (M. Dunand/R. Duru, *Oumm el-'Amed. Une ville de l'époque hellénistique aux échelles de Tyr* [Paris 1962]) and Palmyra (Fellmann 1970; Fellmann 1975; Sadurska 1975). — Tarsus (H. Goldman, *The Lamps*. In: H. Goldman (ed.), *The Hellenistic and Roman Periods. Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus I* [Princeton NJ 1950] 84–133) and Samaria-Sebaste (Crowfoot 1957) are also useful. — The Tel Dor publication (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995) is of great interest and the Tell Anafa publication is anxiously awaited.

⁴ This fabric is difficult to distinguish by eye from possible imports from Antioch, both pottery and lamps. One would expect a large site to have its own production centre, but no kilns have been found. At Palmyra, imitations of Antiochene lamps were made in a very different fabric (Fellmann 1970, 89–90).

⁵ Howland 1978, 72.

Type 3: Wheel-made with angular profile. Before 150 BC.

At Tel Dor this shape is more common than the globular-bodied lamps,⁶ but at Jebel Khalid the angular wheel-made shapes are few. This is the only example from the Domestic Quarter. The shape either forecasts or imitates the profile of the mould-made lamp. It is related to Howland Type 28B, Broneer Type XI.⁷ (1 fragment only).

Type 4: Wheel-made variants. Date range: 225–150 BC.

This is a small group of hard-to-classify wheel-made fragments displaying variations such as humped nozzle rather than flat-topped, or an oval rather than round wick-hole, features which suggest imports rather than local products. (4 fragments).

Type 5: Mould-made: plain watch-shaped body. c.225–180 BC.

These fragments show the continuity between the wheel-made shapes, with their increasingly angular but circular bodies and flat-topped nozzles, and the early mould-made lamps. Two examples from Antioch are almost identical, but one is wheel-made and the other mould-made.⁸ All the Jebel Khalid examples have a simple rounded rim to the filling hole, offset by a groove. In all probability, all had side lugs; all are decorated with red or brown slip. No exact parallels may be found in Howland or Broneer, although the shape relates very loosely to Howland 42B.⁹ It is again Antioch (Waagé's type 11) where we may find the better parallels, all dated to the late 3rd century. (5 fragments).

Type 6: Mould-made; plain elliptical body with side lug. c.225–150 BC (fig. 1,4–5).

This shape is sometimes called delphiniform. The side lug pulls it into more of a kite shape. The best known version of the shape is elaborately decorated in relief with anti-thetical Erotes, a type common in the Levant. Dates for the latter range from 3rd century to a span of 200–50 BC at Tel Dor.¹⁰ This plain version from Jebel Khalid is earlier.¹¹ **Fig. 1,5** illustrates a lamp from the Main Gate which seems to be a larger version of this type and to be the predecessor in shape of Types 8/9. (2 fragments).

Type 7: Mould-made; long, flat undecorated nozzle. Early 2nd century BC?

This one fragment is important in that it may be an early undecorated version of Type 8. Certainly the thin fabric, the very straight, squared-off sides to the nozzle and its flat top level with the rim, are features also of the rosette-decorated nozzles of Type 8. It was found near a primary floor. (1 fragment only).

Type 8: Mould-made; rayed flattish shoulder; flat nozzle with reliefrosettes and bars. c.200–150 BC (fig. 1,6).

These lamps are numerous at the lower levels, under secondary floors with the odd exception. The illustrated example, almost complete, provides the model from which we assume that similarly shaped and decorated shoulder fragments, and nozzles with bars and rosettes belong to this type.

What is uncertain is whether this is the same as Type 9 with the knob handle, a type which also has bars and rosettes on the nozzle (cf. **fig. 1,7**). The functional side lug would seem to preclude a handle, so until further evidence turns up in the shape of a complete lamp, we assume that the handle belongs to a different but related type.

All the lamps in this category have a large filling hole with a diameter ranging from 2.3 to 2.7 cm. The rim is raised and rounded, offset by a significant groove. The general shape of the body might be called lentoid, with the shoulder flattened and the profile shallow. The nozzle is exceptionally straight and flat, in profile resembling the undecorated nozzle of Type 7 i.e. quite thin and with a circular wick hole. Across the bridge of the nozzle are two bars and/or a rosette in relief; the appearance of another smaller rosette above the bars is perhaps later in this series. Only two bases are partly preserved; both are raised by a slight ring and one contains a rudimentary rosette as a potter's mark. Most fragments show traces of red slip on the shoulder, with drips and runs on the lower body, a technique familiar from the local pottery.

The rayed decoration is easy to parallel but the form of the lamp is more difficult. The shape of Antioch 9b and the nozzle fragment 9d (dated late 3rd and early 2nd century) look reasonably similar but are obviously not common at Antioch.¹² The lack of parallels from elsewhere points to a local production, unless these lamps have just not been published from other Syrian sites.¹³ In the absence of closer parallels, Waagé's Type 9, which consists mainly of nozzle fragments carrying relief decoration, in one case a rosette, the others more sophisticated, may give us a chronological range of the first half of the second century.¹⁴ Given the contexts of most of the Jebel Khalid Type 8 lamps in the insula, one must not ignore the possibility of their beginning earlier than this. (14 fragments).

Type 9: Mould-made; as for Type 8 but with knob handle. c.200–150 BC (fig. 1,7).

This type is closely related to Type 8 and may even be the same type, since we lack a full profile for the latter. The

⁶ Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995, 236–237 Tel Dor Type 9, or Type 10.

⁷ Cf. also Scheibler 1976 pls. 48–49 nos. 278–280 (dated 220–150 BC).

⁸ Waagé 1941, nos. 32–33.

⁹ Howland 1958, 130. However, this has always a pierced lug. — Scheibler 1976, 66 no. 378, dated to the end of the 3rd century, provides an almost parallel shape, albeit with pierced lug and relief rosette on the top of the nozzle, the latter making an interesting link with the decoration of the Jebel Khalid Type 7.

¹⁰ See H. Menzel, *Antike Lampen im römisch-germanischen Zentralmuseum zu Mainz*² (Mainz 1969) 21 no. 60 (late 3rd century BC). — C. Lyon-Caen/V. Hoff, *Musée du Louvre, Catalogue des lampes en terre-cuite grecques et chrétiennes* (Paris 1986) 53 nos. 115–116 (last quarter of 3rd to last quarter of 2nd century BC). — Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995, 236 Type 11 fig. 5.17 (with incorrect refs. to fig. 5.16), 200–50 BC.

¹¹ The plain body and simple rounded rim are close to the wheel-made Types 1–4 and the mould-made Type 5, but the S-shape and rosette as lugs are new developments.

¹² Waagé 1941 fig. 74 nos. 22–25.

¹³ The flatter shape is also seen for the bodies (only) of Palestinian lamps of the 2nd century e.g. see P. W. Lapp, *Palestinian Ceramic Chronology 200 B.C. — A.D. 70* (New Haven CT 1961) 194 no. 449.

¹⁴ Waagé 1941, 58.

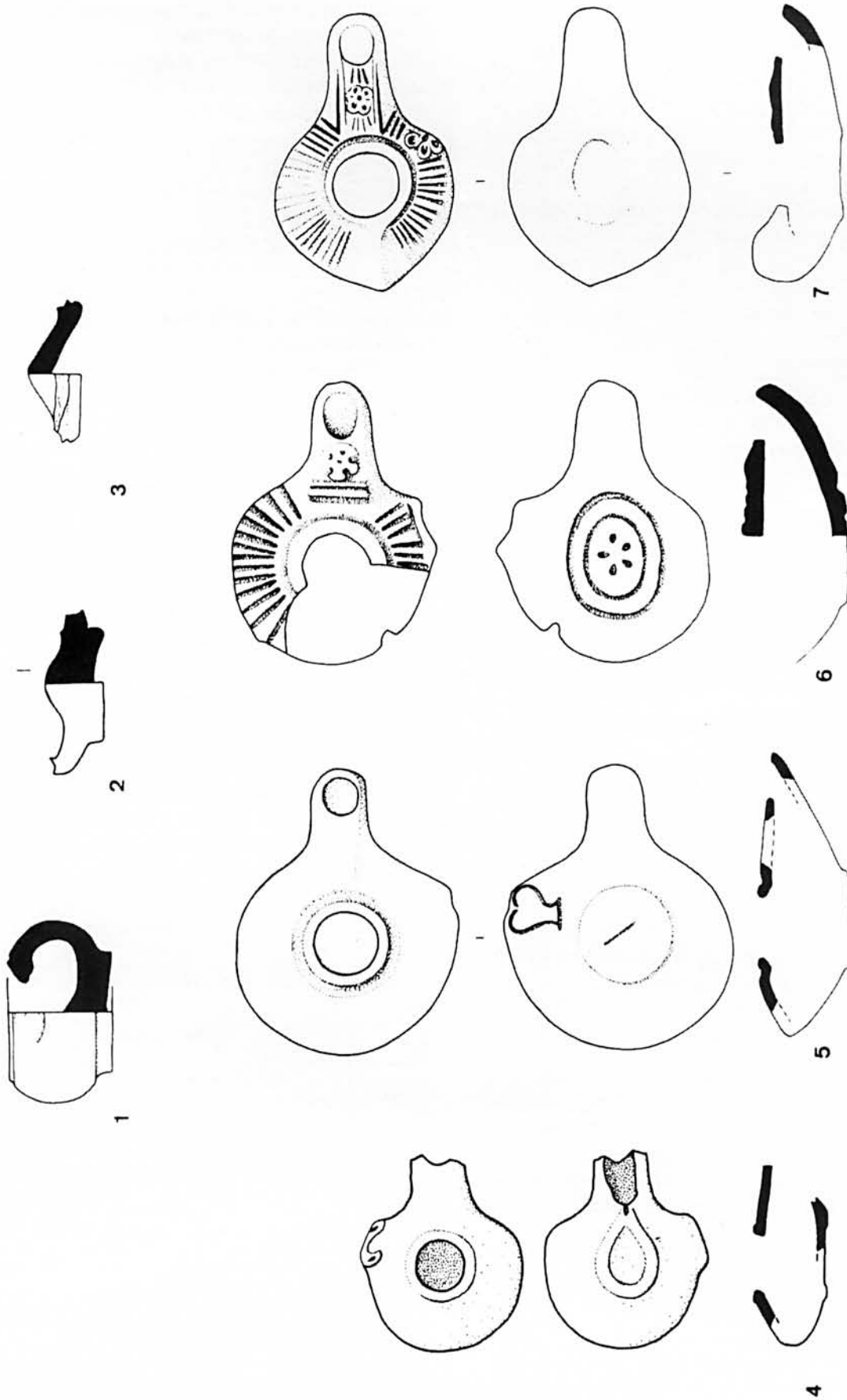


Fig. 1: Jebel Khalid, Phase A lamp fragments. — 1-3 Type 1. — 4-5 Type 6. — 6 Type 8. — 7 Type 9. — Scale 1:2.

lentoid body profile is the same but none of the fragments exhibits a side lug. Presumably the knob handle made the side lug obsolete. Several small shoulder fragments with a similar profile have a side rosette like the relief rosettes on the nozzles of Type 8, so this is another feature that may belong to this type, perhaps replacing the side lug. Two base fragments are preserved, both defined by a low ring, occasionally slightly ovoid, without basal rosette on surviving fragments. Most of the fragments were found at the same levels as Type 8 i.e. below the secondary floors. Most show traces of red slip. The fabric resembles the local pottery fabric. The presence of a handle so relatively early is interesting.¹⁵ (18 fragments).

Type 10: Mould-made; squat, rounded body, rayed shoulders. c.175?–end 2nd century BC (fig. 2,1).

These are quite a different shape from types 8 and 9. The top view of the body is circular and the side profile not as sharply angled as the latter types, in fact more towards the globular. The lamps are generally smaller in every dimension and this partly, but not completely, accounts for the smaller filling hole, on average 1.5 cm in diameter. Another marked difference from Types 8 and 9 is the rim, offset by a groove, slightly raised and concave on top in varying degrees; the concavity may have developed from a double ridge with groove between and possibly lessens with time. Most have a side rosette of purely ornamental value. Surviving bases have a low ring and basal rosette. Two fragments have a decoration in relief of an amphora on the nozzle.

At Athens, lamps with radial shoulder decoration are found in the Agora and Kerameikos in late 3rd and 2nd century contexts.¹⁶ There is no close shape parallel from these sites and only one from Corinth.¹⁷ Rayed, handleless lamps from elsewhere tend to have an S-coil as lug, not a rosette, and are of grey ware.¹⁸ The closest parallels are again from Syria, notably from Antioch.¹⁹ Waagé's Type 13c has a rayed shoulder, no handle on illustrated examples, a concave rim, long flat nozzle and rosette on the base within a low foot. Waagé argues that the ray decoration is the earliest form of decoration on the shoulder and therefore gives this type a queried date of second-quarter to middle of the 2nd century.²⁰ The Jebel Khalid lamps are either Antiochene or competent imitations of the type. Parallels from Dura-Europos, Tell Nebi Mend and Palmyra are dubbed imports from Antioch.²¹ The contexts of all Type 10 are from the secondary levels. The date of this type is therefore important for dating the secondary occupation of the Domestic Quarter. It is interesting to note that Waagé finds this type contemporary with the appearance of Hellenistic 'Pergamene' pottery. (14 fragments).

Type 11: Angular profile; knob handle, rayed shoulders, amphora on nozzle. Dates as for Type 10 (fig. 2,2).

The different profile justifies separating it from the bi-convex profile of Type 10. The sharp angle between shoulder and lower body, the flatter top and the presence of a knob handle are reminiscent of Type 9, but the small size,

delicate fabric and decoration (basal rosette and nozzle amphora²²) are associated with Type 10. The shape may be different but the style of decoration makes it contemporary with Type 10. It is not paralleled by any published examples from Antioch, but relates to the handleless lamps of Antioch Type 13c. (2 fragments).

Type 12: Mould-made; bi-convex body, shoulder decoration other than rays. c.150–75 BC (fig. 2,3–4).

This category is closely related in shape to Type 10 and probably contemporary for some time but remaining popular for longer. This is Antioch's class 13d, which Waagé suggests is later than 13c, the type with rayed shoulders; the only difference being 'the absence of a side knob and the presence of varied decoration'.²³ He proposes a dating from the second half of the 2nd century into the 1st, which also suits the contexts of the finds in the insula, all of which occur at or above secondary floors. All examples are handleless, as at Antioch, and it seems clear that these lamps are Antiochene, the trademarks being the base rosette, and

¹⁵ At Tarsus, Samaria, Tel Dor, the earliest mould-made lamps with handles are the Ephesus type with ribbed loop handles. Likewise at Antioch there is no instance of this type of handle, although type 8d, a moulded lamp, seems to have had some sort of handle and is of the wide-shouldered shape but with no rim to the filling hole.

¹⁶ Howland Types 43, 45–46, 48. See also Scheibler 1976 nos. 385, 386, 391 (first half of 2nd century?)

¹⁷ O. Broneer, *Terracotta Lamps. Corinth IV.2* (Cambridge MA 1930) 65 no. 303, with rays and side rosette; presumably it is pre-146 BC.

¹⁸ Cf. D. M. Bailey, *A Catalogue of the Lamps in the British Museum I. Greek, Hellenistic and Early Roman Pottery Lamps* (London 1975) BM Q50 (from Cyprus); the shape of nozzle is the same and the red/brown slip applied evenly on the shoulder but with runs below is also familiar. However, the raised base is higher and the side lug is plain, not a rosette. Bailey dates this to the 3rd century BC. Another example from Cyprus is said by Oziol to have been 'imported to Cyprus' at the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 1st century BC (Th. Oziol, *Les lampes*. In: J. F. Salles/O. Callot/Y. Calvet, *Les niveaux hellénistiques. Kition-Bamboula IV.4* [Paris 1993] 304 no. 707; cf. also Th. Oziol, *Les Lampes du Musée de Chypre. Salamine de Chypre VII* [Paris 1977] 53 no. 115). A lamp type with rayed shoulder decoration, in grey ware, is found at Tel Dor (Type 12), where it is said to be the typical 2nd century BC lamp and is given a range of 200–50 BC (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995, 238 figs. 17, 11–13 and 16, 1–2; note the captions are wrong). However, it differs from the Jebel Khalid fragments in several respects: the body profile is somewhat flatter, the top of the nozzle is rounded, there is an S-coil rather than a rosette on the left, and none of the Tel Dor examples has a base rosette. This same shape is seen in abundance at Delos (Bruneau 1965 nos. 3416; 3644; 3688 *et al.*) One example at Delos resembles the Jebel Khalid shape more closely, as it has a 'profil presque globulaire' (Bruneau 1965 no. 4368). This is given a date of 150–50 BC. Although none of these parallels is close, the fashion for radial decoration at these sites gives a similar range.

¹⁹ Waagé 1941, 59 fig. 75 nos. 40–41.

²⁰ Waagé 1941, 59 notes that the few fragments of rayed lamps at Corinth must pre-date the destruction of 146.

²¹ For Dura: Baur 1947, 7 pl. 1.4. — For Nebi Mend (ancient Laodicea ad Libanum): M. Pézard, *Mission archéologique à Tell Nebi Mend* (1921). Syria 3, 1922, opposite p. 102 pl. 19 fig. 2b. — For Palmyra: Fellmann 1970, 88 fig. 31.2; Fellmann 1975, 14; Sadurska 1975, 49 fig. 2.2.

²² This amphora is inverted. At Palmyra the lamps imitating Antiochene have inverted amphorae on the nozzle; see Fellmann 1970 fig. 31.5–7.

²³ Waagé 1941, 59.

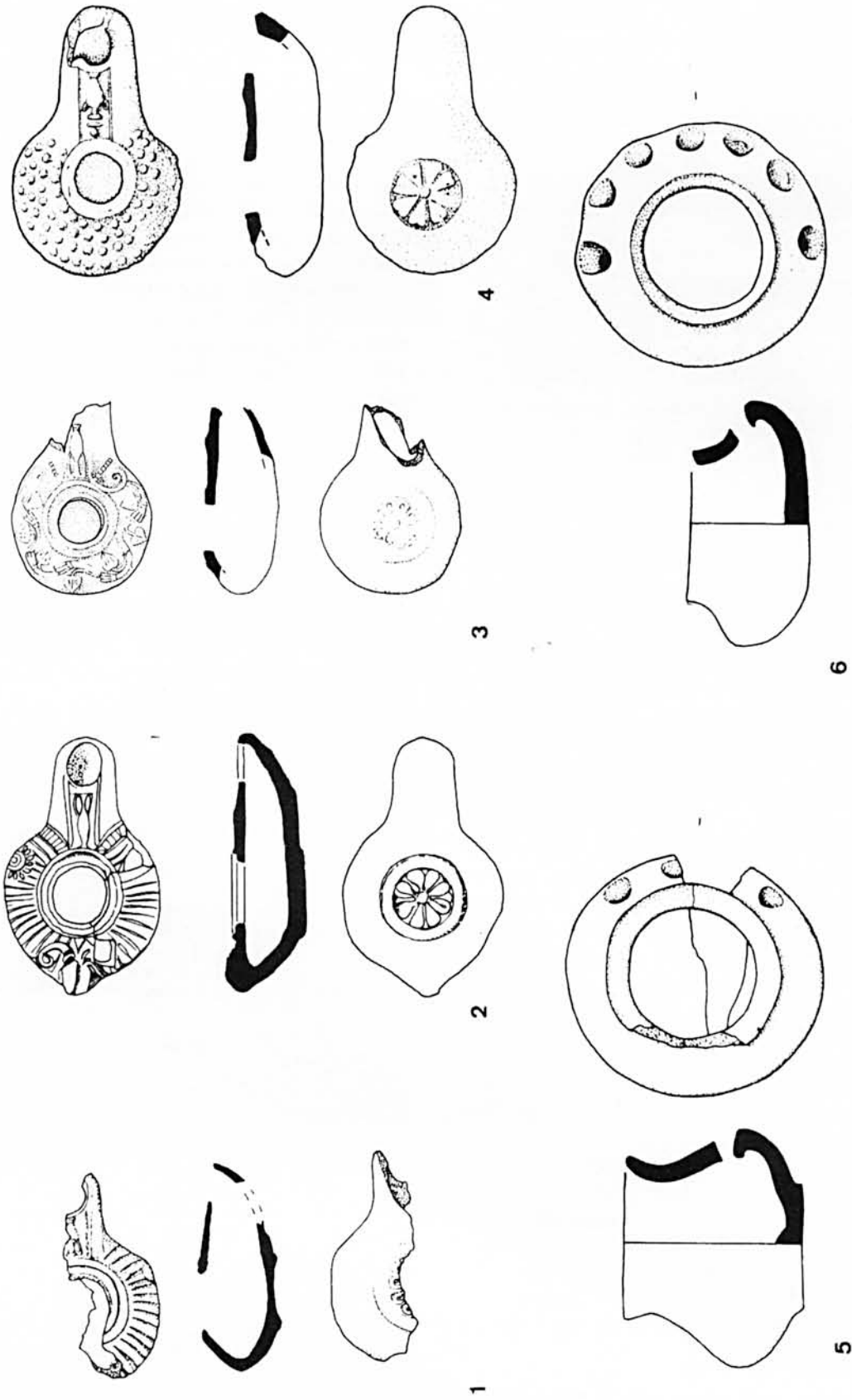


Fig. 2: Jebel Khalid, Phase B lamp fragments. — 1 Type 10. — 2 Type 11. — 3-4 Type 12. — 5-6 Type 15. — Scale 1:2.

the nozzles decorated with amphoras. Most are decorated with red/brown slip. The commonest shoulder decoration, as at Antioch, is the ivy vine.²⁴ The amphora is the commonest nozzle decoration.

The type does not occur at Tarsus, nor, surprisingly, at Tel Dor.²⁵ It seems that distribution was quite limited.²⁶ (19 fragments).

Type 13: Mould-made; 'Ephesus-type' nozzle tip. c.125–25 BC.

This is the only fragment of a grey ware 'Ephesus-type' lamp. These had a wide distribution along the eastern Mediterranean coast. At Tel Dor there are no examples and more significantly, none at Antioch itself. (1 fragment only).

Type 14: Mould-made; voluted nozzle. 1st century BC.

This one small fragment may represent a class which is very numerous at Antioch (Types 24 and 25), at Delos and elsewhere. The lack of this type at Jebel Khalid is not surprising in that the date for such lamps is usually given as the second half of the 1st century BC into the 1st century AD, a period for which there are no coins for the insula on the Jebel and no material evidence of habitation. (1 fragment only).

Type 15: Wheel-made; multi-wick lamps. Post 150 BC. (fig. 2,5–6).

The only multi-wick lamps found on the whole site are of a uniform type and constitute something of a mystery as they are so far without exact parallel. Finds of these on the Akropolis are far more numerous than in the Domestic Quarter. They are all wheel made, with a flat base and circular body with a sharp in-turned carination, above which is a gradually rising collar surrounding the very wide filling hole. This may have a simple rim or an out-flared one, which constitutes one of the few variants in an otherwise consistent shape. The wick holes are poked through from the outside just above the carination, before firing. They may vary in number from three to seven but are always only on one half of the lamp. The base is string-cut, sometimes smoothed or pared, but sometimes left rough. The sides, however, are always well finished, smoothed and self-slipped or yellow-slipped. They are never red or black-slipped. The fabric is highly micaceous (some gold and white mica), of medium fine temper and resembles the fabric of some of the Jebel Khalid semi-fine wares. Yet interiors are left rough. The simple functionalism of these lamps seems very far away from the garlands, rosettes and amphora nozzles of the Hellenistic corpus, and one wonders whether they are in fact from a different period. All were found on or just above the secondary floors, together with lamp types 10 and 11, but with the erosion and tumbling of the higher walls, it is just possible that they have worked their way down. If so, they are the only survivors: no other late Roman and only one possible fragment of a Byzantine lamp have been found in the insula, in spite of the coin evidence of a presence at those times. Why should these survive in significant numbers when others do not? One suspects the basic shape of the most simple multi-wick lamps did not change much over centuries.

If these are later products, we are left with a site that perhaps did not use multi-wick lamps in the Hellenistic period. It seems more sensible, until further evidence or research makes it clearer, to suggest that these were the only multi-wick lamps used by the secondary level of occupation — an utterly local phenomenon.²⁷ (4 fragments).

Conclusions

The most numerous lamp fragments represent the two peaks of Hellenistic settlement:

Phase A: Among the wheel-made lamps, Howland's Type 25 is well represented. These may be imported. By far the most numerous types are the mould-made Types 8/9, which have been difficult to parallel among published lamps. They may be a 'missing link' between the plain early mould-made Types 5/6 and the rayed lamps with elaborate nozzle decoration which belong to Phase B on the site.

Phase B: The mould-made lamps (Types 10–14) from this phase are almost entirely Antiochene in shape and decoration, with the typical potter's mark of a rosette on the base. There is a high proportion of nozzles decorated with amphoras in relief.²⁸ Some wheel-made multi-wick lamps, apparently from this phase and certainly no earlier, need parallels. Multi-wick lamps are otherwise absent.

Three issues arise:

1. Are Types 8/9 paralleled elsewhere in an early or mid-2nd century context? If not, are they a product local only to this area of Syria?
2. The division between Phase A (Types 1–9) and Phase B (Types 10 on) may now be seen, with appearance of Types 8/9, not so much a division as a gradual development (see again **figs. 1–2**), with some shape features (flat-topped nozzles, knob handles) and decorative features (rays, rosettes, amphora nozzles) in common.
3. The multi-wick lamps Type 15 — do they belong to this Hellenistic corpus?

²⁴ Waagé describes the stalks as 'cornucopia-like'. The schema may well be related to the ivy vine decoration on West Slope ware.

²⁵ At Tel Dor there is nothing between the S-coil rayed lamps and the later decorated loop-handled lamps (Tel Dor Type 13, Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995, 238–239).

²⁶ Samaria Q 41, in 'grey ware' resembles the shape and has decoration other than rays, but no base rosette, no nozzle amphora (Crowfoot 1957, 369 fig. 87.2.)

²⁷ One of those excavated on the Akropolis was found near the drum altar and one wonders whether this may indicate cult use. However, there is no such evidence in the Domestic Quarter.

²⁸ This amphora decoration on the nozzle is also seen at Palmyra (Fellmann 1970 fig. 31.1), Hellenistic levels at Tell Ahmar (author's own observation), Uruk (E. Strommenger, *Gefäße aus Uruk von der neubabylonischen Zeit bis zu den Sassaniden*. Ausgr. Dt. Forsch.gemeinschaft Uruk-Warka 7 [Berlin 1967] 18) and as far away as Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (N. C. Débevoise, *Parthian Pottery from Seleucia on the Tigris*. Univ. Michigan Stud. Human. Ser. 32 [Ann Arbor MI 1934] no. 373). At Palmyra, the majority of local imitations of Hellenistic lamps display the amphora (Fellmann 1970 fig. 31.5–7), suggesting that this was the predominant imported 'model' which reached Palmyra.

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