

Jagoda Mardešić

**THE LAMPS WITH VOLUTES AND TRIANGULAR
NOSES FROM ASSERIA BEING KEPT IN THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM IN SPLIT**

Summery

The collections of the Archaeological Museum in Split contain numerous finds from Asseria that were purchased for the museum. The most numerous objects include clay oil lamps (mostly completely preserved or only slightly damaged). According to the records in the inventory books, the first examples were acquired in 1923, while most were purchased in 1930. No more detailed information, such as the specific site of discovery or much less the grave, could be found in the museum archives for those years. The existing data refers only to the amount paid for the antiquities and the costs of transport to Split.

This work discusses the lamps with volutes and triangular noses. The degree of preservation clearly indicates that they came from graves. The inventory books of the Archaeological Museum in Split notes for some of them that they came from a necropolis. In addition to lamps, the museum also purchased thin-walled vessels, terra sigillata, jugs – all obviously grave goods. The lack of data about the circumstances of the find means that it is not possible to reconstruct the grave units and in this manner attempt to gain a more detailed picture of the cemetery and a more precise dating of the graves and the material in them.

Without this data it is possible to rely only on the typological analysis and on analogies with documented grave finds. This approach is quite limited because most of the lamps discussed here have characteristics of at least two variants of type L I. Relying on analogies to grave finds from other sites also has failings – it is important to realize the possibility that individual types of lamps may not have been imported into various provinces at the same time and hence would not have been in use at the same time. The importation and use of pottery objects is not uniform at different centers within the same region, as is best shown by the examples of terra sigillata, which is a very common find at some sites in Dalmatia, while at others it is very rare.

Nonetheless, the broad chronological framework for dating is quite solid, as in the workshops on Italian soil, type L IB was produced from the reign of Tiberius to the end of the 1st century, and in Pannonia production continued throughout the entire 2nd century. The production of type L IC began somewhat later – in the second half of the 1st century and continued to the third quarter of the 2nd century, and in Pannonia it was produced to

the first half of the 3rd century. Lamps of type L IB/C are very common, with variants the most frequent of which was the “Raetian lamp” type.

Only one example from the museum collections belongs to variant L IA (cat. no. 52). The lamp has no scene on the disc, which is rare for lamps of this type. Of the others, the lamp in cat. no. 1 is probably the earliest. It represents one of the products of the early series with thin walls, a narrow tip to the nose, and a refined workmanship. The air hole is shaped like a slit, which also indicates an early date. The shoulder type, the summarily shaped spirals, and the lack of a channel between the disc and the nose means that it actually belongs to type IB, and not IA. Five lamps belong to type L IB (cat. nos. 1, 4, 16, 58, and 59).

J. Istenič noted that numerous lamps have characteristics of both types IB and IC, and distinguished two variants of type B/C. They are most numerous among these examples from Asseria with a total of 53 (cat. nos. 2-21, 23-31, 33, 34, 36-37, 40-51, 53-57, 60, 61, 62, and 64). This type composes 80% of the lamps with volutes and triangular noses preserved in the Archaeological Museum in Split that come from Asseria.

Two lamps belong to type L IC (cat. nos. 38 and 39), and they are characterized by exceptionally poor workmanship and an almost deformed shape – particularly cat. no. 38 where the volutes had almost completely disappeared, only markings remaining visible. Lamp no. 22 probably also belonged to this type, although the tip of the nose is not preserved, but it also has a deformed shape and merely markings for the volutes.

Some of the lamps have workshop stamps on the base. The most numerous were stamped circles, ranging from one to five: cat. nos. 2, 13, 17, 26, 30, 44, 46, 51, and 54 have one circle, cat. nos. 10, 24, 25, 31, and 57 have two, cat. nos. 36, 39, 45, and 60 have three circles on the base, cat. no. 20 had four, and cat. nos. 3, 27, and 42 have five circles.

Nine lamps have a letter in relief on the base: C (cat. nos. 16 and 34), D (cat. no. 11), F (cat. no. 23), I (cat. nos. 37 and 51), P (cat. no. 62), T (cat. no. 22), and perhaps two letters: VI (cat. no. 59 – this cannot be established with certainty as the base is not completely preserved).

The pottery quality is usually uniform. Well-refined clay was used that had a pale brown to ocher color after firing. Visible added elements included quartz sand, and some of the lamps contained mica and grey and white additives. They were coated with a brown-red slip that on some of the lamps occasionally changed to a dark grey color.

It can be concluded on the basis of the marks on the bases, the characteristics of the pottery, and the color that the lamps were imported from the northern Italic region, i. e. from Cisalpine and Aquileian workshops. This was the region from which many goods were intensively imported, particularly in the 1st and 2nd centuries, such as pottery, amber, and objects made from other materials.