

A BRONZE LAMP OF LATE ETRUSCAN TYPE

(Con le tavv. XVI-XVII f. t.)

Among the superb and desirable bronzes which Richard Payne Knight bequeathed to the British Museum in 1824 is a bronze lamp with three nozzles surmounted by a winged male figure (*tavv.* XVI-XVII). Its Registration number is 1824.4.54.25, and it is 29.0 cm high, and 16.4 cm across, from the tip of one nozzle to the projection on the opposite side. This object is described by Payne Knight in his MS. *Catalogue of Bronzes*, chapter LIV, no. 25, who mentions that it was obtained by him from Sir William Hamilton with a group of lamps, most of which were found in the neighbourhood of Naples; thus no provenience can be certainly ascribed to it. It is further described in Edward Hawkins' MS. *Catalogue of Bronzes in the British Museum* iii, p. 173 (also mentioned in vol. ii, p. 207), written after 1837 and before 1860; he says that it came from the Naples area, but this must be a misreading of Payne Knight's list. At some time in the late nineteenth century it was decided, probably by H. B. Walters, that the lamp and the figure did not belong together, and they were divided; the separated figure was catalogued in Walters' *BM Bronzes* of 1899 as no. 956, although he included the whole object as no. 2524. It must be assumed that the catalogue slip for 2524 was written before that of 956, and was not modified before publication; but there is the puzzling circumstance that the latter is described as standing on a base decorated with ancient bronze masks. It seems strange that the figure should have been removed from the lamp and placed on such a base, which cannot now be identified, but there is no possibility that 956 is another figure altogether. Walters published the lamp again in 1914 in his *BM Lamps*, as no. 36, and mentioned that *BM Bronzes* 956 had been removed as alien. Walters, both in *BM Bronzes* 2524 and *BM Lamps* 36, says that the object was found near Naples, but, as we have shown, there is no certainty of this. At some time after 1914 the lamp was relegated to the Forgeries Cupboard, where it remained until 1960, when the present writer returned it to the lamp collection, although at that time it was not known whether or not it was ancient. The winged figure, *BM Bronzes* 956, has always been regarded as an antiquity, and has been exhibited more or less continuously in the

Etruscan cases of the Museum, except during the war and the years immediately following it.

The plinth on which the statuette stood does not sit too happily upon the lamp, and the writer conjectured that it may have been made in the eighteenth century in order to bring together two alien objects, the figure and the lamp. Many pastiches of ancient bronzes are known, and the dealers of the period were knowledgeable men who would have known that such a lamp would have had such a suspension figure. Accordingly, a few years ago, when Dr. Paul Craddock of the British Museum Research Laboratory was collecting material for his studies on the compositions of ancient bronzes (1), he was asked to analyse samples taken from the figure, its plinth, and the lamp. The results of the analyses are as follows:

« Using a portable jewellers drill, approximately 10 mgm samples were taken from the base of the lamp, the top of the plinth and from the back of the statuette. The samples were analysed by atomic absorption spectrometry using a flameless atomiser to determine the arsenic and bismuth. The analytical details are more fully described in 'The composition of copper alloys used in the classical world' by P. T. Craddock (Ph. D. Thesis, University of London). The results of the analyses are given in the following table:

Lab. no.		Cu	Pb	Sn	Ag	Ni	Fe	Sb	As	Co	Bi	Zn
Plinth	(1063)	77	12.9	9.6	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.06	0.2	0.05	—	—
Base	(9.3)	75.5	13.6	9.9	0.05	0.03	0.14	0.08	0.2	0.02	0.05	—
Statuette	(1399)	78	12.2	8.9	0.05	0.04	0.09	0.07	0.2	0.02	—	0.01

CONCLUSION

The three components of the lamp are all of leaded tin bronze typical of Late Etruscan bronzework. Both the major trace element concentrations of all three are almost identical. This demonstrates that the three parts were most probably cast at the same time, and suggests that the lamp as a whole is not a pastiche, but a genuine work of the Etruscan period » (2).

As the above results imply that the object is a coherent whole, the figure has now been removed from its modern base and reunited with the lamp, and both elements are at present exhibited together in the Etruscan Gallery in the British Museum.

(1) The first results of which are published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* III, 1976, pp. 93-113.

(2) *BM Research Laboratory File 3623*, 30 June 1976.

The lamp is in the form of a shallow bowl with incurved sides, the upper part decorated with a moulding surmounted by a row of beads, with a slightly sunken, inward-facing, plain rim, not accurately circular; the interior of the lamp is very roughly made. Three tapering nozzles are placed equidistantly round the circumference; they have flat tops with raised edges, and are fluted and scalloped on the underside. Midway between each of the nozzles is a small conical projection, three in all. They appear to be broken at the tip, and their function is not clear. Two of them have hollows bored at the tip, which may be traces of repairs, to join pieces now lost. It is possible that these projections were snake protomes. Compare the clay snake protomes illustrated with the lamps and fragments from the tomb of the Volumni (3). The smoothly-curving underside of the lamp is concave in the centre, at which is a petal-edged medallion with a head of a young Pan or satyr, with goat's horns above the forehead, and long, wild hair. Radiating from the centre are three relief figures of maenads; they give the impression of being applied, but were, in fact, cast with the lamp: there were, no doubt, applique wax figures attached to the original model before it was moulded. All three wear long chitons; two move to left, the third moves to right. The latter holds a *patera* and a *situla*, the others have, respectively, a *patera* and a bird, and a knife and an animal, possibly a hare.

In the centre of the bowl of the lamp is a conical element crowned by a decorative plinth. The plinth is circular with a flat top; its sides narrow towards the bottom and are heavily moulded, with a row of small beads at the top edge, a band of dentils below, then a plain band, a row of small beads, a plain band, a band of reels, a narrow plain band and two wide plain bands. Below this is a row of eight adjacent buds of two different forms alternating; two of them are lost, and two of them, on opposite sides to each other, are pierced with a large hole, the purpose of which is not apparent. The flat top of the plinth shows the marks of the two feet of the statuette surmounting it, together with holes bored through to take two pegs inserted into the feet and legs of the figure. It could well be that both the footmarks and the holes are modern, but the statuette would have had to have been attached in some way; at least one of the pegs is modern and the other may also be.

The statuette is that of a winged youth, standing with his weight on his left leg, with the right slightly bent. He is nude, except for a cap from which rises a swan's neck and head, which served as a suspension hook for the lamp. An anklet is worn on the left leg and a bracelet on the left wrist. He pours

(3) G. CONESTABILE, *Dei Monumenti di Perugia Etrusca e Romana, Il Sepolcro dei Volumni*, Perugia, 1855, pl. XIII, 6-7.

from a jug in his upraised right hand, and holds a *phiale mesomphalos* in his lowered left hand. The wings are spread wide, with details of feathering on the front only. Walters suggests that the figure may represent Ganymede (*BM Bronzes* 956); Cupid is a definite possibility, but some kind of Etruscan minor deity or demon, perhaps a wind-god, seems more likely. The whole object has received the standard Payne Knight treatment, having been stripped of its corrosion products and the bright bronze darkened with an applied surface coloration.

Multinozzled suspension lamps with a head in a medallion in the centre of the underside have a long popularity. Compare the lavishly decorated Etruscan bronze lamp from Cortona, with a Gorgon's head, dated "circa" 450 to 400 B.C. (4), and a Roman example from Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, also with a head of Medusa (5). An Etruscan example, with eight nozzles, but otherwise very similar to the lamp portion of our object, with a Medusa-head in a central medallion, is in Florence (6). Compare also a six-nozzled lamp, with nozzles closely resembling those on our lamp, and with similar decorative features: a central medallion and six applique-looking figures radiating from it, much in the style of ours, but of better workmanship — but on the *upper* side of the lamp (7). The *Castellani Sale Catalogue* states that it is the upper element of a candelabrum. A pencilled note in the British Museum's copy of the *Sale Catalogue* says that Hoffmann doubted its antiquity, but stylistically there is nothing to condemn it. It was sold again in 1905 (8); the present writer does not know where it is now.

Swan-capped figures, not all, but some probably from hanging lamps, are also found over a long period of time; the majority would seem to be Etruscan. These include the superb third century B.C. example in Florence, with a winged figure carried by a youth (9), a winged figure with panpipes in the British Museum, probably of fourth-third century date (10), and several illustrated and discussed by von Gerken and Messerschmidt in their paper on the Tomb of the Volumni (11). Some of them are as early as the sixth

(4) *Mon. Inst.* (1842), pls XLI-XLII; R. BIANCHI BANDINELLI - A. GIULIANO, *Etruschi e Italici prima del dominio di Roma*, Milan, 1973, p. 200, figs 235-6.

(5) C. BOISSE, *Le Trecastin, des origines à la chute de l'Empire Romain*, Valence 1968, pl. XXII.

(6) Inv. no 896; *St. Etr.* XII, 1938, pp. 219-221.

(7) H. HOFFMANN - C. MANNHEIM, *Castellani Sale Catalogue*, 17 March-10 April 1884, Paris 1884, pl. VII, 280.

(8) A. SAMBON ET AL., *Guilhou Sale Catalogue*, 16-18 March 1905, Paris 1905, pl. XIV, 308.

(9) R. HERBIG, *Götter und Dämonen der Etrusker*, Mainz 1965, pl. 50.

(10) *BM Bronzes* 1137.

(11) *RM LVII*, 1942, p. 194, figs 20-21, p. 195, figs 22-24, p. 199, fig. 25, p. 203,

century B.C., and one of them is rather like ours in pose, with a jug held high in the right hand, the left hand lowered but lost (12).

However, the closest parallels to the British Museum lamp as a whole are the terracotta examples found in the Tomb of the Volumni near Perugia. At least four lamps were present, two virtually complete, and fragments from two others (13). The complete lamps have eight and six nozzles respectively, with winged figures, differing in pose, above them (14). These lamps are discussed by von Gerkan and Messerschmidt (15) and they came to the conclusion that they were probably made about 100 B.C.; this may well be correct, but the tomb was in use from "circa" 150-120 B.C. down to the middle of the first century B.C. (16) and there is no way of knowing at what stage during the century of usage that the lamps were introduced. Another pointer to the date of multinozzled hanging-lamps with winged-figure suspension is the representation of one on a Roman wall-painting of the Second Style on the west wall of Triclinium G in the Villa of P. Fannius Sinistor at Boscoreale (17). This painting is dated to the early first century B.C. (18). Another chronological hint is the style of the maenads on the underside of the lamp. These figures, crude as they are, are very much in the Neo-Attic tradition, harking back to classical Greek forms. A tendency to copy previous styles began early in Greek art and archaistic relief sculpture appears at least as early as the fourth century B.C. (19). However, the figures on the lamp are very poor relations indeed to such Neo-Attic representations of maenads as those in the Villa Albani in Rome (20) and also to some illustrated in Philippart's discussion "Iconographie des Bacchantes d'Euripide" (21). Neo-

figs 27-28, pls 15-17; the figure shown on p. 209, fig. 34 is false and there are several replicas of it, including *Ant. Cl.* 1951, p. 294, pl. I; *BM Bronzes* 957; *Helbing Auktion Katalog*, München, 1910, p. 47, no. 617; E. F. VON SACKEN, *Die antiken Bronzen... Wien*, Wien, 1871, pl. XIX; CLARAC - REINACH I, pl. 526, no. 1409.

(12) *RM LVII*, 1942, p. 194, figs 20-21.

(13) CONESTABILE, *op. cit.*, pl. XIII.

(14) The eight-nozzler: *BA* 1915, p. 163; *RM LVII*, 1942, p. 191, figs 16 and 19; *EAA VI*, 1965, p. 88, fig. 99. The six-nozzler: *DAR. SAGL.* III, 2, p. 1335, fig. 4605; *RM LVII*, 1942, p. 191, fig. 19 (figure only); see also HERBIG, *op. cit.*, frontespiece.

(15) *RM LVII*, 1942, pp. 189 ff.

(16) BIANCHI BANDINELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 362, fig. 410 and pp. 311-2 and fig. 361.

(17) J. ENGEMANN, *Architekturdarstellungen des frühzweiten Stils*, Heidelberg 1967, pl. 33, 1. Compare also the hanging object in a circular building painted on a wall of the Casa del Labirinto at Pompeii (*ibidem*, pl. 39).

(18) *Ibidem*, p. 113.

(19) A. W. LAWRENCE, *Late Greek Sculpture*, London 1927, pp. 42-3.

(20) *Ibidem*, pls 84-5.

(21) Compare, for example, his pl. XIV in *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* IX, 1930.

Attic relief-sculpture was produced largely in Greece, mainly for export to Italy, shortly after 100 B.C. until well into the first century A.D. (22), and it seems likely that the craftsman who made our lamp had such reliefs in mind when he devised the decoration for the underside.

The presence of the wall-painting at Boscoreale mentioned above, and the possibility that the British Museum lamp was found in the vicinity of Naples, opens up the question of the manufacturing source of the latter. Is it Etruscan? Could it be Campanian? Or is it just Republican Roman? Does it matter? The type seems certainly to derive from Etruria, as the examples mentioned above indicate, and they may have been exported in sufficient quantity to become familiar enough to be represented on Roman wall-paintings. But there is no reason why such copying should be confined to paint: bronze founders elsewhere in Italy, including Campania, could very well have made their own examples, and it may be one of these which the wall-painting depicts. Stylistically, the winged figure of the British Museum lamp is Etruscan, and one which could have been produced in the third century B.C. However, its reunion, confirmed by the analysis of the fabrics, with the lamp, with its clumsy Neo-Attic relief figures, brings the statuette down to the first quarter of the first century B.C., by comparison with the Volumni lamps and the Boscoreale painting. If it had been found in Etruria it could be described as Late Etruscan, even with this late date, but it might with equal justice be regarded as Roman of the late Republican period.

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(22) A. W. LAWRENCE, *Greek and Roman Sculpture*, New York, 1972, pp. 246-7.



