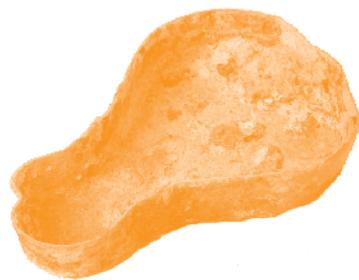


An “achtformige” bronze lamp from Ptuj/Poetovio



Abstract: This research highlights a recent discovery, at Poetovio, among a huge number of standard imported Roman oil lamps, of an open-shape copper-alloy lamp to be used with tallow (type Loeschcke XXV). This form, together with its clay counterpart (type Loeschcke XI), is typical of the northern Roman limes provinces where its production and usage was almost exclusive. To understand the uniqueness of this find so far south, the authors have mapped all the known parallels made of different metals. They also present a short introduction to the very eclectic clay variant, which is marginal almost everywhere except for Trier, where it constitutes by far the most common type, quantitatively speaking, of Roman lamps found *in situ*.

Keywords: Slovenia, Poetovio, Roman bronze lamp, northern limes type

Two major old commercial roads crossed in the area of Poetovio: the continental Amber Road that turned southeast from the Pannonian Plain and the navigable waterway and riparian route along the Drava River connecting the central eastern Alps with the Lower Danube. The fortified hill, an exceptional view stretching from the castle, and the area next to it were settled from prehistoric times. Poetovio is an old place-name, possibly with roots in pre-Celtic times. The pre-Roman settlement belonged to the Celtic Noric kingdom (Horvat 2003: 153–159).

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Under the Roman Empire, once the borders of the provinces had been set, the territory of modern Slovenia belonged partly to the tenth Italian region and partly to the provinces of Noricum and Pannonia, and was divided into administrative areas (*ager*) of the Roman towns of Aquileia, Tergeste (Trieste, Italy), Emona (Ljubljana, Slovenia), Celeia (Celje, Slovenia), Flavia Solva (Leibnitz, Austria), Neviodunum (Drnovo, Slovenia) and Poetovio (Ptuj, Slovenia) (Nestorovič 2012: 10).

The Romans began to conquer Pannonia in Augustan times, whereby the military camps (*castra*) played a very important role. In Poetovio, there might have been two or more forts, one of which may have been situated on the right bank of the Drava (Horvat 2003: 156). The Vičava area on the left bank also has a long history of archaeological investigation (Lubšina-Tušek 2015: 127–191). Military equipment of early date was found recently at Vičava (Janežič and Lazar 2015: 259–267; Pečovnik and

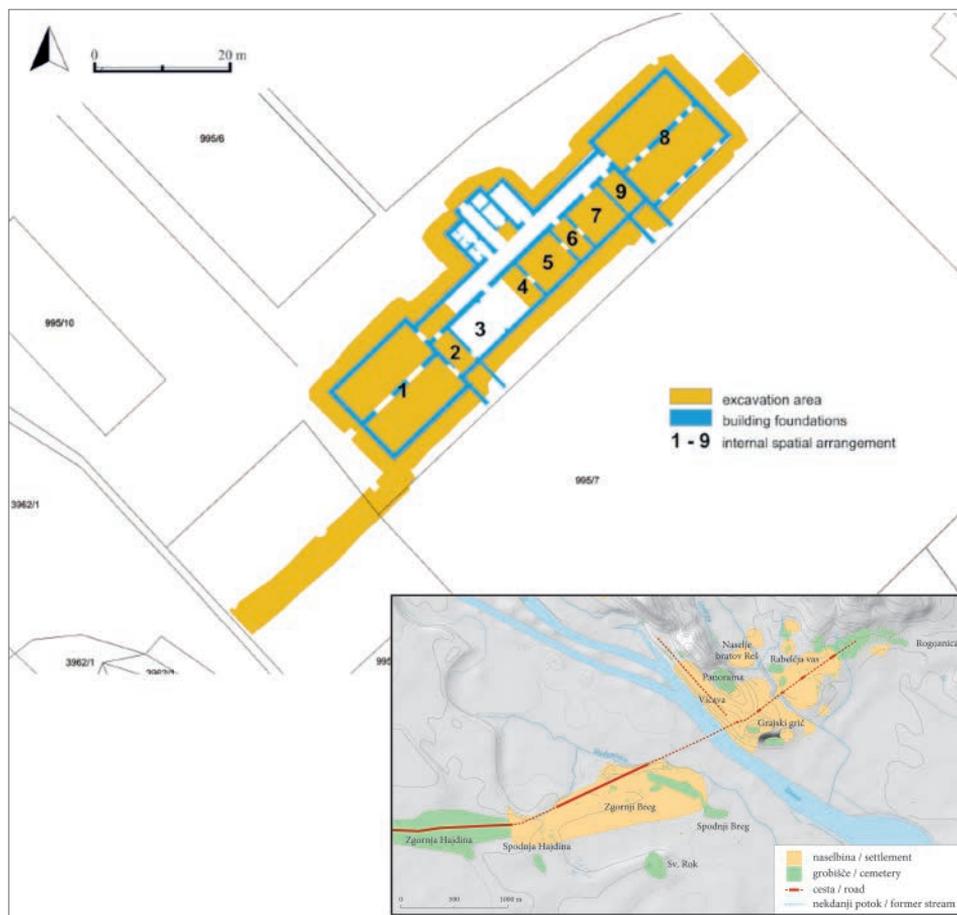


Fig. 1. The excavated area in Vičava; inset, location of Vičava on the plan of the Roman settlement of Poetovio (After Janežič and Lazar 2017: Fig. 3; inset, after Horvat and Dolenc-Vičič 2010: Fig. 2)

Rupnik 2017: 83–85) and they are also present on display in the regional museum Ptuj-Ormož, although without known archaeological contexts. The early military post or encampment could have been situated in the area of Vičava and Panorama hill. The city forum most probably developed later in Vičava and the urban quarter on Panorama hill. The most important part of Poetovio from a strategic point of view was the left bank of the Drava by the bridge, which is where the military was deployed to judge by the small finds. The copper alloy lamp was found in this context.

The Legio VIII Augusta was quartered in Poetovio from the time it arrived in the region, probably between AD 6 and AD 9. About AD 45 it was replaced with Legio XIII Gemina.

In the reign of Trajan, between AD 98 and 102, the city was raised to the status of a colony called Colonia Ulpia Traiana Poetovio. The settlement grew rapidly, becoming the seat of a tax office and the Illyrian customs (*publicum portorii Illyrici*) under Hadrian (AD 117–138). Poetovio thus became one of the biggest and most important cities, a true cosmopolitan center between the Adriatic and the border on the Danube.

The last prosperous phase of the city was in the time of the 4th century restorations. After that it declined, shrinking to the surroundings of the forum, the cemeteries slowly encroaching upon the outer districts.

The copper-alloy lamp in question was discovered during regular archaeological excavations in 2010 and 2011, in



Fig. 2. Two of the many Roman clay lamps found at Poetovio in the same context (© Archive of the ZVKDS, CPA = Janežič and Lazar 2017, biga: No. 16, pp. 331–332, 336 and Pl. 3; olive wreath: No. 28, pp. 333, 337 and Pl. 4, both dated to the mid 1st century AD)

the area of a former army building situated in the Vičava area, on the left bank of the Drava, where the bridge crossed the river to the city center. The forum was located between the river and two hills near the main Celeia–Savaria road [Fig. 1 inset].

The assemblage from the fieldwork, now being processed, is impressive: "approximately 38,000 different fragments of pottery, glass, metal, and faunal remains. Of these, 160 fragments belong

to oil lamps and only one of these (approximately 0.5%) is of bronze and not clay. All the lamp fragments were found in Roman structures and medieval fill of robber trenches left after the stone was reused in the Middle Ages. The assemblage is wholly Roman in date. Most of the lamps seem to be imported and can be dated to the 1st century AD. A tiny minority of the lamps were locally produced (Janežič and Lazar 2017: 327–328) [Fig. 2]. [AN]

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE FIND: AN OVERVIEW OF ALL KNOWN CLAY AND METAL PARALLELS

The lamp unearthed at Poetovio (Regional museum Ptuj-Ormož, Acc. No. 31-2019/Arh) [Fig. 3] is intact, with the exception of the handle, which is lost. A greenish patina in places suggests that the lamp was made

of a copper alloy. Well preserved with the exception of impact traces, probably due to use, which damaged the shape of the nozzle, it is to be attributed to the classical Loeschcke XXV form. Its dimensions



Fig. 3. Copper-alloy lamp found in Ptuj/Poetovio (© Archive of the ZVKDS, CPA)

(L. 14.5; W. 9.3; H. 2.5 cm) are a perfect fit for conventional counterparts from the northern provinces. It has not been published except for a very short description and drawing (Janežič and Lazar 2017: No. 13, p. 336 and Pl. 3).

It is both unexpected and unique to find a lamp of this shape executed in a precious material so close to the Mediterranean and in a context delivering only high-quality, mainly imported, Roman clay oil lamps of the standard Loeschcke I type with very neat discus decoration and *Firmalampen* (Janežič and Lazar 2017). To understand the importance of this single find, it is essential first to review the evidence for clay and metal parallels.

A. CLAY VARIANT: TYPE LOESCHCKE XI: MID 1ST TO SECOND HALF OF 2ND CENTURY AD

This very eclectic lamp form, called “achtformige Lampe” because of its shape recall-

ing a figure-eight, is known mainly from its clay variant (Loeschcke type XI). As far as wheel-made clay lamps are concerned, their distribution is very well defined with the center in the region extending from Cologne to Trier. At the latter site, which was established during the reign of Claudius, they constitute the largest group among Roman lamps from the mid-1st to the second half of the 2nd century AD, with more than 230 such items listed in a special article on their subject (Goethert 1989 with a list of all the then known parallels; see also Bussière and Wohl 2017: Nos 459–460, pp. 325–326).

The lamp finds can be divided into two groups, the earlier examples characterized by a lack of applied ring handle at the rear [Fig. 4], which is the main feature of lamps from the second, later group [Fig. 5]. Smaller quantities of lamps are found outside the core production zone, in Belgium, Luxembourg, northeastern



Fig. 4. Loeschcke XI lamp, subtype 1, found in England (British Isles?) (© The Trustees of the British Museum, Inv. 1915,1208.50 = Bailey 1988: Q1647)



Fig. 5. Loeschcke XI lamp, subtype 2, probably from Cologne (© The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California, Inv. 83.AQ.377.422 [=Bussièrè and Wohl 2017: 459])

and even central France (for all known French parallels, see Bémont and Chew 2007: No. GA356, page 310 and Pl. 69, and the recently published Hanotte 2018: 60ff.), southern England (Bailey 1988: Q1642 to Q 1649, pp. 171–172 and Pls 9–10 with list of parallels found in Great Britain) as well as in some other Roman sites along the Rhine, from Noviomagus (Nijmegen) to Mogontiacum (Mainz) and, further south, to the Swiss plateau and then, with isolated finds, along the Danubian limes, at least until Vindobona, where four such lamps were discovered recently by the Vienna City Archaeological Service (Sakl-Oberthaler 2018).

Vindonissa and Aventicum are good examples of low numbers of these lamps in the regions mentioned. They constitute a small part of wheel-made tallow lamps, which are represented mostly by simple tallow bowl-lamps with a high and concave rim (Loeschcke XIII or *Tiegellampen* type), the simple “Phoenician-looking” form, that is, a simple bowl pinched for creating the wick-holder or “nozzle” (Loeschcke XII) and the much more widely diffused multi-use Loeschcke XIV (or *Tüllenlampen*), characterized by a circular shape with vertical rims and a central tube pierced by incisions, a special invention allowing them to be used as either a candle-holder or a wick-holder (see Quevedo 2019, in this volume, for votive purpose of a very similar shape produced at Carthago Nova).

B. METAL VARIANT: TYPE LOESCHCKE XXV: LATE 1ST TO 3RD CENTURY AD

A metal copy of the clay version described above is classified as type Loeschcke XXV. Contrary to general belief, valid for many prestigious types of

bronze lamps, that metal lamps are precursors or sources of inspiration of the clay counterparts, lamps belonging to the Loeschcke XXV type are metallic adaptations of simple wheel-made lamps, exactly as in the case of the rare bronze-made *Firmalampen* (only Vertet 1983: 126–129, argued to the contrary).

The earliest clay lamps of this type are evidently from the reign of Claudius, while the earliest well-dated metal lamps do not appear before the last 30 years of the 1st century AD.

Interestingly, the bronze variant of the Loeschcke XXV lamps is very limited by microregion compared to the concentration of iron artifacts, while some lead lamps of this type are known as well [Fig. 6:A]. In addition, with some exceptions located in the southern part of Great Britain, archaeological sites where iron lamps were found did not yield any bronze lamps of the same shape, and vice-versa. In Switzerland, for instance, only iron-made artifacts are known [Fig. 6:B–C] while along the Rhine Valley, only bronze lamps have been found. On the whole, judging by the published material, metal lamps of this shape were hugely popular in Great Britain and on the Swiss plateau, and much more sporadic elsewhere.

It is also notable that real bronze (not copper alloy) lamps were decorated and were found in or near sacred buildings. A lamp from Nérís/Acquae Nerii, a thermal center hosting the Legio Octava Augusta during the second half of the 1st century AD, located about 220 km west of Lugdunum (Lyon), bears the inscription “Matris Deum” repeated four times, rendered by small impressed points, on both sides, on the lunar crescent handle



Fig. 6. Metal lamps: A – lead lamp recently found near Lincoln (East Midlands); B–C – iron lamps from Aventicum (Switzerland); D – bronze double-nozzled lamp from Aventicum (Switzerland); E – bronze lamp from Nérís (A – © Portable Antiquities Scheme <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/79038>; B–C and D – after Chrzanovski 2006: Nos 119–120, p. 78 and No. 108, p. 76 © Musée romain d'Avenches; E – after Vertet 1962: 349)

ornament and on the lamp bottom. The inscription is probably a dedication to Cybele (Vertet 1962) [Fig. 6:E].

One should add two unique binozzled lamps, one found at Aventicum,

the second at Cologne, furnished with a lunar crescent as handle ornament (Leibundgut 1977: No. 1016, p. 62 and Pl. 19, with further bibliography for the Köln lamp, *non vidi*) [Fig. 6:D].

IN RECAPITULATION

To sum up, bronze variants were popular mostly as votive offerings; they could even be linked to a legionary presence, while variants in cheaper metals (iron, lead) were used on an everyday basis apparently in Britain and on the Swiss plateau. However, for all variants, from clay to metal, the lack of any *status quaestionis* for Belgium, Luxembourg, eastern and northern France and the unevenly studied parts of the Rhine limes should be emphasized. Monographs presenting lamp corpuses from the biggest cities and museums in the region have been published, but a full panopticum of the finds is still much awaited. Hence, for instance, an iron lamp published from the Roman fortress of Gelduba near Xanten shows

that this type of lamp in other metals than bronze was in use on the Swiss plateau as much as in Britain, although of course not in the same quantities [Fig. 7].

As far as the Poetovio lamp is concerned, it is not only one of the earliest Loeschcke XXV devices found to date, but it is above all a find from a site that is farthest to the southeast. A lamp discovered near Győr, Hungary (without a known provenance) at the end of the 19th century (now in the Archaeological Institute of the Romanian Academy) is the only parallel found so far to the east. The lamp may have traveled this far down the Danube with the legions in the late 1st to mid 2nd century AD, but equally well it may have been pre-

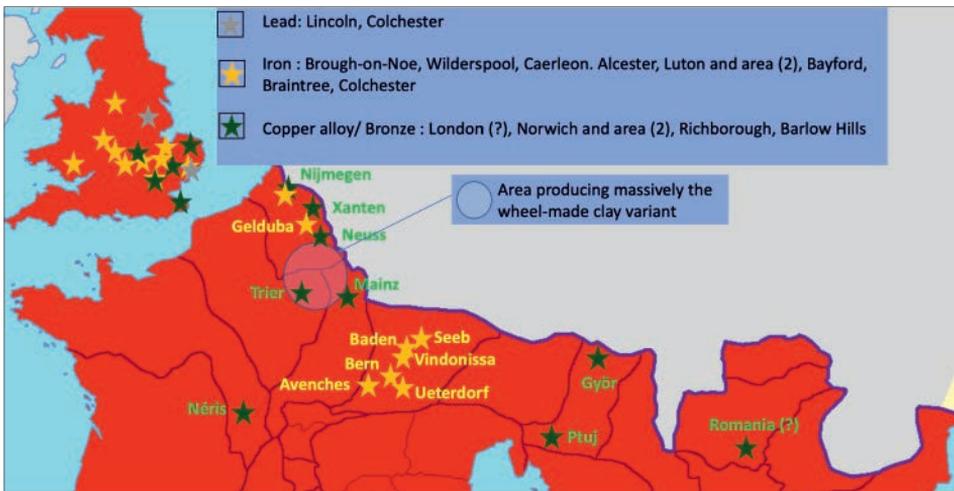


Fig. 7. Distribution of metal Loeschcke XXV lamps (Processing L. Chrzanovski)

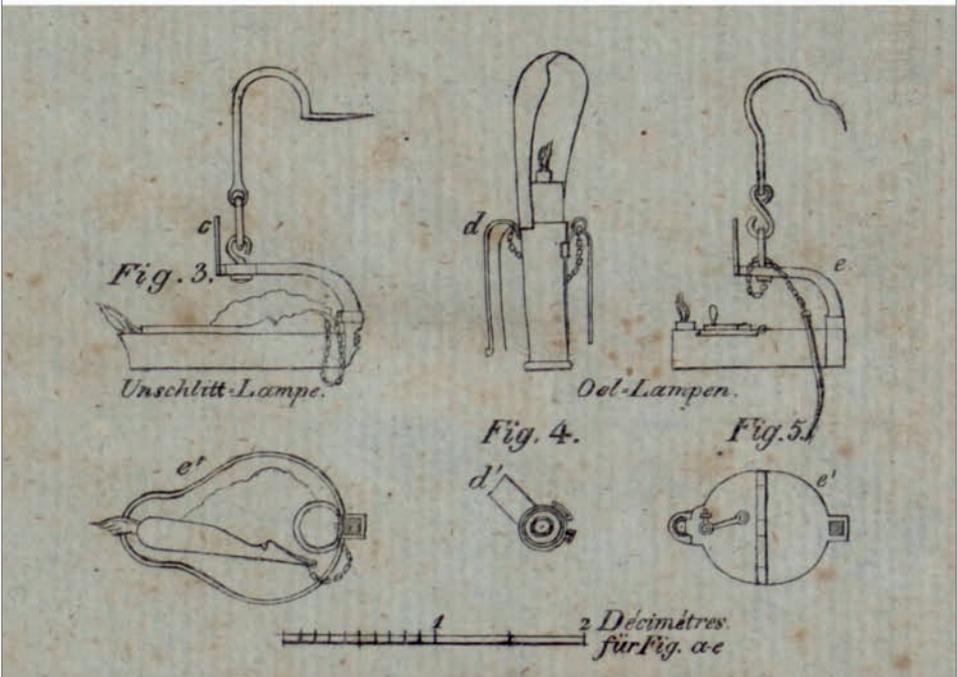


Fig. 8. Iron mine lamp used in late 19th century Austria: top, preserved specimen; bottom, patent drawings (Top, © miners-lamps.com; bottom, after Hartmann 1822: Pl. 1 © e-rara.ch)

sented as a collector's donation. Should the first hypothesis be confirmed by new archaeologically contextual finds, it would open a discussion, but for the moment it is excluded. So far, lamps of such form (whether of bronze, other metals or clay) have not been recorded, either at the best excavated sites near the Danube in Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania or in the form of erratic discoveries in the course of rescue excavations.

To conclude with one of the many anecdotes material history is rich in, it must be stressed that an identical shape will be used for the first known

medieval clay lamp specifically for mining, massively used in Austria and the Czech lands from the 15th century. The one difference from the Roman predecessors is a large pierced tubular channel allowing the lamp to be set on a wooden pick. Once metal became affordable in later times, the figure-eight lamp (often called "froschlampe") was massively produced to provide poor but vital light for miners from the Germanic world, from the Ruhr coal-mines to the Austrian salt mines, at least until the mid 18th century (Porezag 1980; Büttner 2017) [Fig. 8].

APPENDIX

List of published and illustrated parallels with further bibliography

Bronze/copper alloy lamps (from north to south)

Great Britain: Bailey 1996: Q3751–Q3752, pp. 55–57 and Pls 64–65; Eckardt 2002: lamps 719, 1620, 2267, 2268, Fig. 111, p. 244

Netherlands: Nijmegen: Evelein 1928: 71 and Pl. XIX:4

Germany: Xanten: Behrens 1920: Pl. 4:1; *Novaesium*: Vegas 1966: No. 306, p. 126 and Pl. 5;

Trier: Goethert 1994: No. 24, pp. 349–351; *Mainz*, unknown exact findspot: Menzel 1969: No. 706 and Fig. 94, p. 114; *Mainz-Weisenau*: Kirsch 2002: No. 617, pp. 161–162 and Pl. 28

Hungary: Győr: Iványi 1935: 304 and Pl. LXIII:4

Romania: unknown findspot, preserved at the Institute of Archaeology of the Romanian Academy: Simion 2003: No. 50, p. 80

Iron lamps

Great Britain: Bailey 1996: Q3753–Q3761, pp. 57–58 and Pls 65–68; Eckardt 2002: lamps 1024, 1035, 1372, 1520 (Fig. 109, p. 241), 1603, 2259 (Fig. 110, p. 242)

Netherlands: Nijmegen: Evelein 1928: 70 and Pl. XIV:3

Germany: *Kastellvicus von Gelduba near Xanten*: Reichmann 2002: 89 and Pl. 4,1, p. 93

Switzerland: *Vindonissa* (3), *Aventicum* (2), *Ueterdorf* (1), *Bern-Enge* (1), *Baden* (1), *Seeb* (1): Leibundgut 1977: Nos 1029 to 1037 and Pl. 21 (lamp 1035)

Lead lamps

Bailey 1996: Q3762, p. 58 and Pls 64–68

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