

# Byzantine-period lamps from Antioch-on-the-Orontes and its hinterland



**Abstract:** The paper is an off-shoot of the author's PhD project on lamps from Roman Syria (at the University of Geneva in Switzerland), centered mainly on the collection preserved at the Art Museum of Princeton University in the United States. One of the outcomes of the research is a review of parallels from archaeological sites and museum collections, and despite the incomplete documentation in most cases, much new insight could be gleaned, for the author's doctoral research and for other issues related to lychnological studies. The present paper collects the data on oil lamps from Byzantine layers excavated in 1932–1939 at Antioch-on-the-Orontes and at sites in its hinterland (published only in part so far) and considers the finds in their archaeological context.

**Keywords:** terracotta lamps, Byzantine, Antioch-on-the-Orontes, archaeological context

From 1932 to 1939 Antioch-on-the-Orontes and its hinterland were excavated by a joint mission from Princeton University and the Louvre Museum. The material excavated at the time was to be shared by the organizing institutions (the members of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes included the Worcester Art Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Musées nationaux de France, and Princeton University). In 2015, the author came across a rich lamp collection

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### **Notes and acknowledgments**

This article is part of the author's doctoral dissertation, in which this group of lamps has been studied in the context of lamps dated to other periods. The lamps were studied and photographed by the author with permission from Princeton University, courtesy of the Princeton University Art Museum. Gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University.

**Erratum:** the version published in December 2020, of which four examples were downloaded, was not validated by the author. The present version is the correct one.

in storage at the Princeton Art Museum. The archives of Princeton University's Department of Art and Archaeology yielded records of 700 lamps, Hellenistic to Byzantine, which could be traced to these excavations based on information like reference number, sector and date recorded on the artifacts themselves. The documentation of the excavations and likewise the finds, now digitized (Princeton University Open Access Raw Data: <http://vrc.princeton.edu/researchphotographs/s/antioch/>

page/introduction, accessed: 20.08.2019), appears to be thorough, encompassing field notebooks (for each sector), diaries, annual reports, object sheets and negatives. Processing of the raw data produced an assemblage of 555 lamps for which the archaeological context is established. However despite the meticulous and industrious approach of the archaeologists, their project was interrupted by the outbreak of World War II and eventually left unfinished.

## THE OIL LAMPS OF ANTIOCH

Lamps discovered during the season of 1932 were published by Frederick Waagé in 1934, in the first of five volumes devoted to the publication of the Antioch-on-the-Orontes excavations. The study actually boiled down to a basic classification of the lamps by type and chronological division with references to the works of Oscar Broneer (1930) and Siegfried Loeschcke (1919). The three main groups (Hellenistic, Roman and early Byzantine) were subdivided into several subgroups (Hellenistic I to VIII and Roman I to XI) (Waagé 1934: 58–67). A larger study of the typology of lamps discovered at Antioch and in its hinterland appeared in the third volume of the publication series, concerning the years 1937–1939 and published after the suspension of the project in wartime. Waagé (1941) categorized the lamps into 62 types. He did not consider the archaeological context except for the deposits in sectors 16 P and 7 O (in any case, treated in two paragraphs), but he provided a list of the inventory numbers of the

published lamps (Waagé 1941: 71–73). In an unpublished doctoral dissertation, J.J. Dobbins (1977) discussed some of the lamp finds jointly with lamps from other sites from the region, proposing in effect a new typology. A recent study by Anne-Sophie Martz (2012) is dedicated to lamps originating from eight private houses in Antioch.

The author's toolbox for reconstructing the stratigraphy of the excavations based on the rich and thorough archival records has given a promising review of lamp distribution across the sectors and levels. The presentation below is based on the typology and dating proposed by Waagé (1941), which he developed based on the excavation records. Since most lamps, however, come from museum collections, the date of such lychnological devices cannot be anything but approximate.

The present paper is focused on Byzantine-period lamps from the Antioch excavations of the 1930s. Seven types have been distinguished in the course of the research [Table 1].

Table 1. Byzantine-period lamps from Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Daphne and Seleucia Pieria, presented by excavation context and classified by type

		Waagé		Waagé 50	
		49b-d	50a	50e	50f
<b>Sector</b>	<b>ANTIOCH-ON-THE-ORONTES</b>				
10-N	Bath B, Atrium House	1			
11-M	Bath C, Byzantine stadium (Palaestra with Hippodrome B)				
7-O/P	Bath E	14			
13-R	Bath F	26			1
17-O	Buildings and Nymphaeum			1	
9-V	Church in Machouka	2			
7/8/9-N	Circus (Hippodrome A)				1
15-M	House of Aion	1			
14-S	House of Iphigenia	1			
15-R	House of the Calendar, House of the Drunken Dionysus	1			
16-P/17-P	Main Street Dig				
18-O/P	Theatral Building				
11-L	Tower Area				
14-R	Trial trench	1			
17-N	Vaulted Shops or Store-rooms, Main Street Dig	1			
<b>DAPHNE</b>					
DH-24-P	House of Ge and the Seasons				
DH-25/26-M/N	House of Menander (House 1), House of the Red Pavement (House 2), House 3, House 5				
DH-23/24-M/N	House of the Boat of Psyche (DH-200-217)	3			
DH-26/27-O	House of the Buffet Supper	2			
DH-26-K/L	House of the Triumph of Dionysus, Constantinian Villa	6			
DH-27-P	House of the Worcester Hunt			1	
DH-28-O	Mosaic of the Beribboned Lion	1			
DH-20-N	Theater at Daphne (DH-161)				
<b>SELEUCIA PIERIA</b>					
S-17-E	Funerary Grotto			1	
S-19-G	Port area (Docks, portals & vaults), Market district	1		3	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>61</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 1. (continued)

Waagé 51			Waagé 52		Waagé	Waagé	Waagé	TOTAL	
51a	51b	51c	52a	52b156	52b157	53	54		56
3	1			1	2	1			9
	3		5		2				10
	2		3		2	1			22
1		1	1			6		20	56
	1			4		2		9	17
						1			3
4	3	1			1				10
		1		4		1			7
									1
									1
1/		2/	1/		1/			/1	5/1
								8	8
				1		1			2
	1			1	1	2			6
						1		2	4
1		1							2
1						1			2
						1			4
				2		4		1	9
									6
1				1					3
3						1	1		6
		1							1
					1				2
				1			1		6
15	11	7	10	15	10	23	2	41	203

**A. TYPE WAAGÉ 49B, C, D**

*Assemblage:* 61 lamps and fragments [for sectors and contexts, see *Table 1*; *Fig. 1*]

*Dating:* from 4th to 7th century AD (Waagé 1941: 66) = type Dobbins 9,3 (Dobbins 1977: 62–71)

*Description:* Flat circular body without handle. Nozzle somewhat projecting in variant b, almost unobservable in variant c, absent from variant d where the wick hole appears instead at the edge of the lamp. Central filling hole. Top decorated with impressed circles, semi-circles, dots, sometimes with a representation of a fish or iconography in relief, either vegetal (flower of six or seven petals) or religious (Christogram “Chi-Latin cross”). Bottom decorated with impressed circles and dots or a representation of a bird. The walls are thin, therefore

most examples discovered during the excavations of Antioch are fragmentary. Clay color varies from beige and pinkish.

*Parallels* (principally for type Waagé 49d):

- archaeological sites: **Cyprus:** type Vessberg 20 (Vessberg 1953: 127), Salamis (Oziol and Pouilloux 1969: 24); **Syria:** Anab al-Safina (Bounni 1979: 56), Ras Ibn Hani (Touma 2001: 57, Fig. 5); **Lebanon:** Beirut, type Mikati 14 F (Mikati 1998: 67, 102); **Turkey:** Sirkeli Höyük (excavations of Bern University directed by Mirko Novák; Katarzyna Langenegger, personal communication).
- museum collections: Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, 37 examples (Oziol 1977: 19, 280, Pls 46–47); British Museum in London, five examples (Bailey 1988: 290–291, Pl. 61); Metropoli-

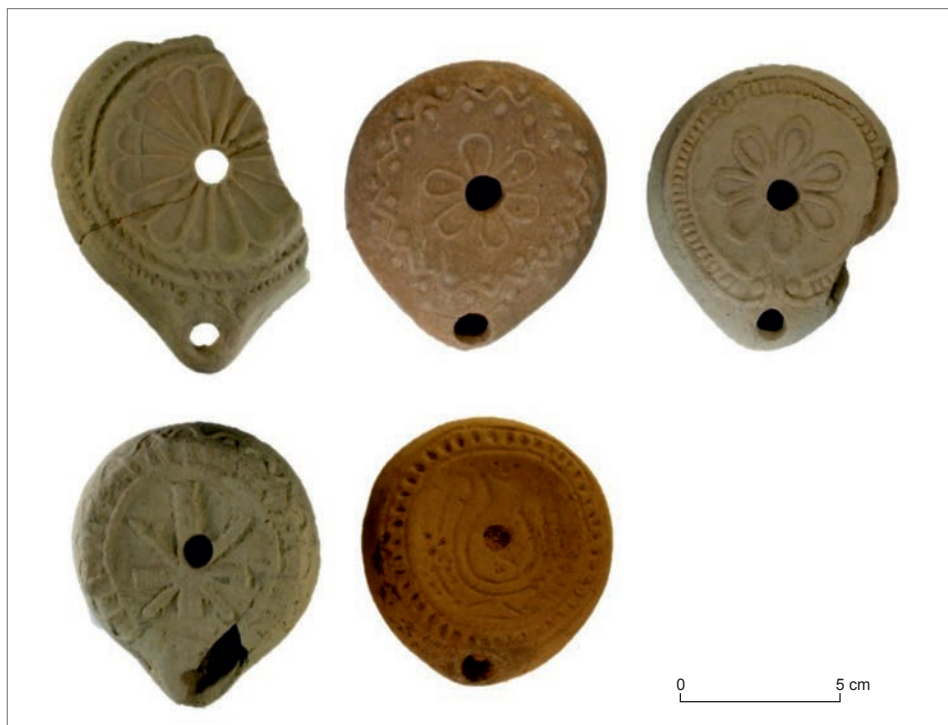


Fig. 1. Lamps of type Waagé 49b, c, d (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

tan Museum of Art in New York, six examples (Lightfoot 2005: 203-206, Pls. 94-95); Kelsey Museum of Archaeology in Michigan, one lamp from Rome ([http://quod.lib.umich.edu/k/kelsey/x-0000.00.0597/0000\\_00\\_0597p01.tif](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/k/kelsey/x-0000.00.0597/0000_00_0597p01.tif), accessed on 22.08.2019); Mersin Museum, six examples (Lafli forthcoming).

*Discussion:* This type of lamp is known as a Pebble or early Byzantine lamp. Looking at the assemblage in the collection of the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia, Thérèse Oziol suggested a Cypriot provenance based on 37 examples from the Museum of Nicosia and gave the lamps from Antioch published by Waagé as the sole parallels. Three similar lamps were found at Salamis in Cyprus by the French mission working in 1964–1974 (see [chypre.mom.fr](http://chypre.mom.fr), accessed: 4.06.2019). Karageorghis (1967: 112, Pl. CVI) published one example excavated (between 1952 and 1974) by the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus from Tomb 50 in the Salamis area. Contrary to Oziol, Dobbins (1977: 63) suggested Antioch as the production center.

Variants discovered at Ras Ibn Hani represent 38% of the lamps discovered there (Touma 2001: 52). Until other data becomes available, one should consider the question of the origin of these lamps as still open.

**B. TYPE WAAGÉ 50A, E, F**

*Assemblage:* eight lamps and fragments [for sectors and contexts, see *Table 1*; *Fig. 2*]

*Dating:* from 4th to 6th century AD (Waagé 1941: 66)

*Description:* Elongated body with little defined nozzle and no handle. The discus features relief decoration and a filling hole in the center. Variant Waagé 50e has a decorated rim. The cross in relief begins to appear on lamp discuses in variant 50f. *Parallels* (corresponding to type Waagé 50e):

- archaeological sites: **Cyprus:** type Vessberg 18 (Vessberg 1953: 127); **Lebanon:** Beirut, type Mikati 17 D (Mikati 1998: 70, 105)

*Comments:* Common variant in Cyprus.



Fig. 2. Lamps of type Waagé 50a, e, f (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)



Fig. 3. Lamps of type Waagé 51a, b, c (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)



Fig. 4. Lamps of type Waagé 52 (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)



**C. TYPE WAAGÉ 51A, B, C**

*Assemblage:* 33 lamps and fragments [for sectors and contexts, see *Table 1; Fig. 3*]

*Dating:* from 3rd to 5th century AD (Waagé 1941: 66–67)

*Description:* Circular or elongated body with a handle and a nozzle with big wick hole. Discus reduced to a thick relief ring around the edge of a central filling hole. Shoulder filled with a relief ornament, either geometrical (rows of dots) or vegetal. Bottom may be decorated with a cross in a circle forming the base.

*Parallels* (equivalents for the following types):

- Type 51a: **Lebanon:** Beirut, type Mikati 17 A (Mikati 1998: 69, 104)
- Type 51b: **Syria:** Anab al-Safina (Bounni 1977: 56), Kherbet al-Sheikh Hamid (Al-Maqdisi 2011: 49); **Turkey:** Zeugma, Hawari 6 (Hawari 2013: 179)

**D. TYPE WAAGÉ 52**

*Assemblage:* 35 lamps and fragments [for sectors and contexts, see *Table 1; Fig. 4*]

*Dating:* 5th century AD (Waagé 1941: 67)

*Description:* Elongated body with triangular handle, turning into curved and pointed. Relief ridge around discus, forming a channel between the filling hole and wick hole. Geometrical decoration on the discus and shoulder, mostly incised. Cross decoration obvious on the discus and handle, sometimes also on the underside of the nozzle part in front of the base.

*Parallels* (equivalents to type Waagé 52b):

- archaeological sites: **Syria:** Anab al-Safina type 4 (Modrzewska-Marciniak 1977: 148–149), Dehes type 3 (Sodini et al. 1980: 256), Bosra (Bussière and Rivel 2012: 282); **Turkey:** Zeugma, type Hawari 7 (Hawari 2013: 179)

**E. TYPE WAAGÉ 53**

*Assemblage:* 23 lamps and fragments [for sectors and contexts, see *Table 1; Fig. 5*]

*Dating:* 5th and 6th centuries AD (Waagé 1941: 67)

*Description:* Piriform body with a high handle. Large filling hole. Geometrical decoration on the shoulder.

*Parallels:*

- archaeological sites: **Syria:** Apamea (Lorand 2011: 226–237), Kherbet al-Sheikh Hamid (Al-Maqdissi 2011: 49), Dehes type 1a (Sodini et al. 1980: 254)
- museum collections: Schloessinger Collection (Rosenthal and Sivan 1978: 121), Getty (Bussière and Wohl 2017: 398), British Museum Q 2344 (Bailey 1988: 289, Pl. 61), Yale Art Gallery, type Kennedy 20 (Kennedy 1963: 108, pl. 27), Rivel Collection (Bussière 2012: 276), Bouvier Collection (Chrzanowski 2015: 82: 2019: 395ff.).

*Discussion:* Variants of this type discovered at the site of Apamea have richer decoration. Molds for this type have been recorded from Apamea.

**F. TYPE WAAGÉ 54A, B, C**

*Assemblage:* two lamps and fragments [for sectors and contexts, see *Table 1; Fig. 6*]

*Dating:* 4th and 5th centuries AD (Waagé 1941: 67), known as North African lamps (Hayes 1980: 63)

*Description:* Piriform body with high triangular handle; earlier variant has a rectangular concave discus.

*Parallels:*

- archaeological sites: **Tunisia:** El Djem, Sbeitla, Kesra (Bussière and Rivel 2012: 238–246)



Fig. 5. Lamps of type Waagé 53 (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)



Fig. 6. Lamps of type Waagé 54a, b, c (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

– museum collections: Getty (Bussièrè and Wohl 2017: 354–360), British Museum Q 1755–Q 1841 (Bailey 1988: 194–202, Pls 20–28), Royal Ontario Museum (Hayes 1980: 68, Pl. 34), Bible and Orient Museum in Fribourg (Schafer 2008: 3–57, Pls 7–61); forged copies at the Royal Ontario Museum Nos 554–556 (Hayes 1980: 138, Pl. 65)

*Discussion:* Waagé mentioned the discovery of nine imported lamps of this type (Waagé 1941: 67), but it is obvious from his remarks that this type was rarely discovered during the Antioch excavations. The type is famous for a rich decoration of the discuses, comprising Christian iconographic motifs.

**G. TYPE WAAGÉ 56**

*Assemblage:* 41 lamps and fragments [for sectors and contexts, see *Table 1*; *Fig. 7*]

*Dating:* 6th century AD and later (Waagé 1941: 67–68)

*Description:* Almond-shaped body with conical handle. Large filling hole, shoulder bearing geometrical decoration.

*Parallels:*

- archaeological sites: **Southern Levant:** Pella, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Ramleh, Beth Shearim; **Egypt:** Fustat (Bussièrè and Wohl 2017: 405); **Syria:** Khirbet al-Sheikh Hamid (Al-Maqdissi 2011: 49), **Turkey:** Edessa (Chrzanovski, Lafli, and Kan Şahin 2019)

– museum collections: Museum of



Fig. 7. Lamps of type Waagé 56 (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

Mardin (Chrzanovski, Lafli, and Kan Şahin 2019)

*Discussion:* The type, despite many varieties Waagé identified all as one type without defining any clear order (Waagé 1941: 67), has been attested in large numbers at numerous sites across the Levant and southern Turkey. It was further developed and used in Islamic times. Chronological

subcategories proposed by Chrzanovski are based on form and decoration (Bouvier Collection, Chrzanovski 2015: 94–109; 2019: 416–450). In a recent catalog of the Getty Museum, the discussion of the chronology gives dates between the 5th and the 11th century (Bussière and Wohl 2017: 405).

## SUMMARY

The seven types of Byzantine-period lamps from the excavation of Antioch-on-the-Orontes and its hinterland demonstrate the transition from Roman circular lamps to the elongated shapes of later periods. The Antioch lamps are also witness to a change in the principles of the decoration: mythological themes all but disappear in favor of geometri-

cal and vegetal motifs, with a sporadic representation of faunal (birds and fish) and religious (Christogram and crosses) images. The simplicity and limited range of themes represented on these seven types of lamps is rather surprising when compared to the elaborately decorated Byzantine-period lamps found at the sites of Apamea and in North Africa.

## APPENDIX

The following is a presentation by type of the distribution of lamp finds in the excavated sectors of Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Daphne and Seleucia Pieria (1932–1939). Although the issue was not discussed in

the paper, the properties of the clay could suggest a local provenance for most of the lamps considered here. However, archaeo-material analyses are required to provide more information on this question.

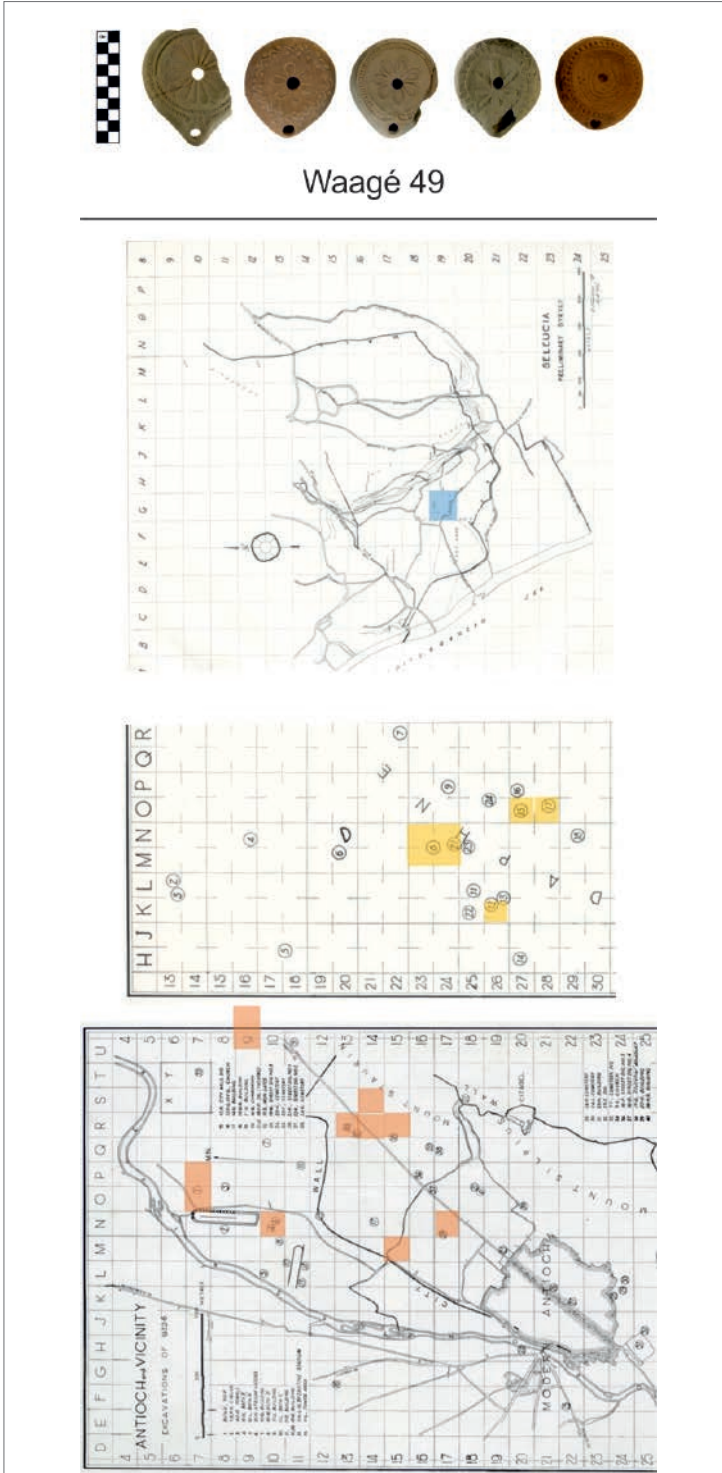


Fig. 8A. Distribution of lamp finds type Waagé 49 in the excavated sectors at (from left) Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Daphne and Seleucia Pieria (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

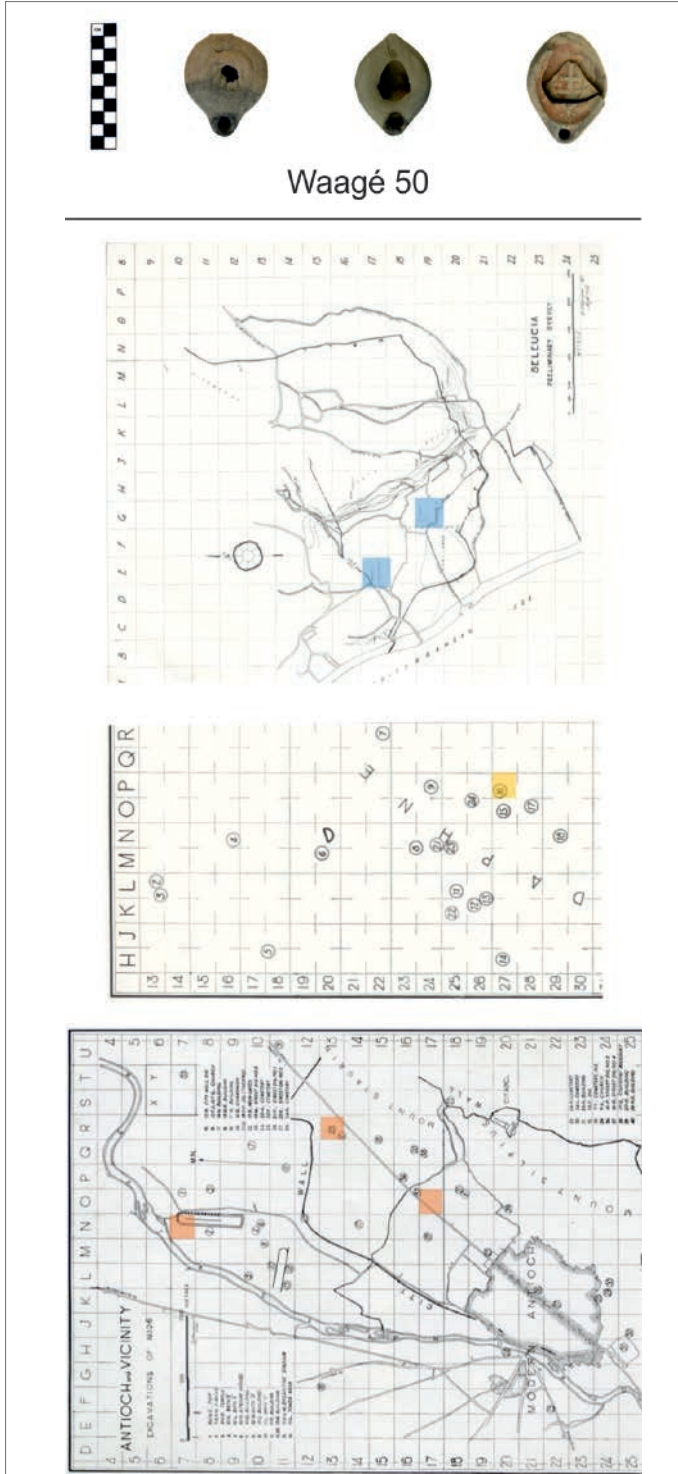


Fig. 8B. Distribution of lamp finds type Waagé 50 in the excavated sectors at (from left) Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Daphne and Seleucia Pieria (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)



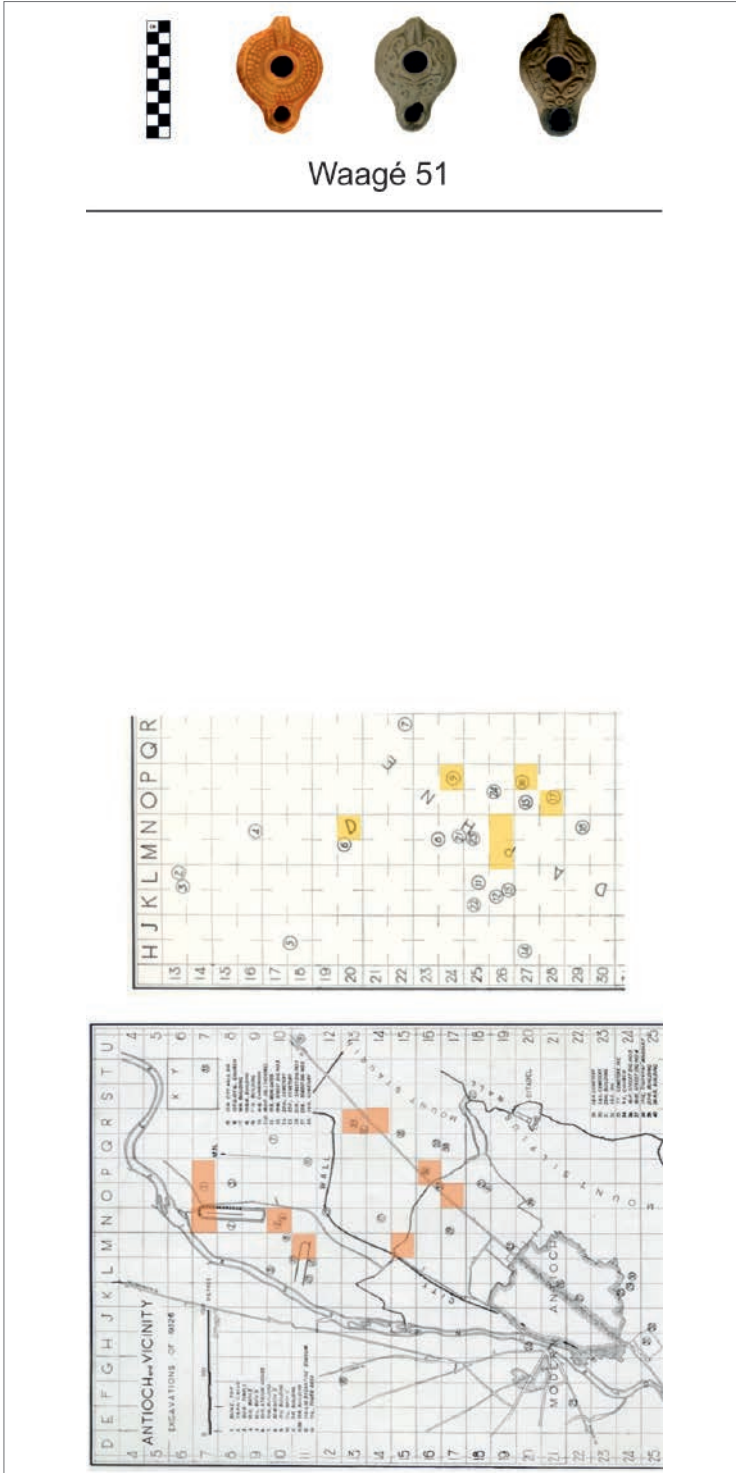


Fig. 8C. Distribution of lamp finds type Waagé 51 in the excavated sectors at (from left) Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Daphne (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

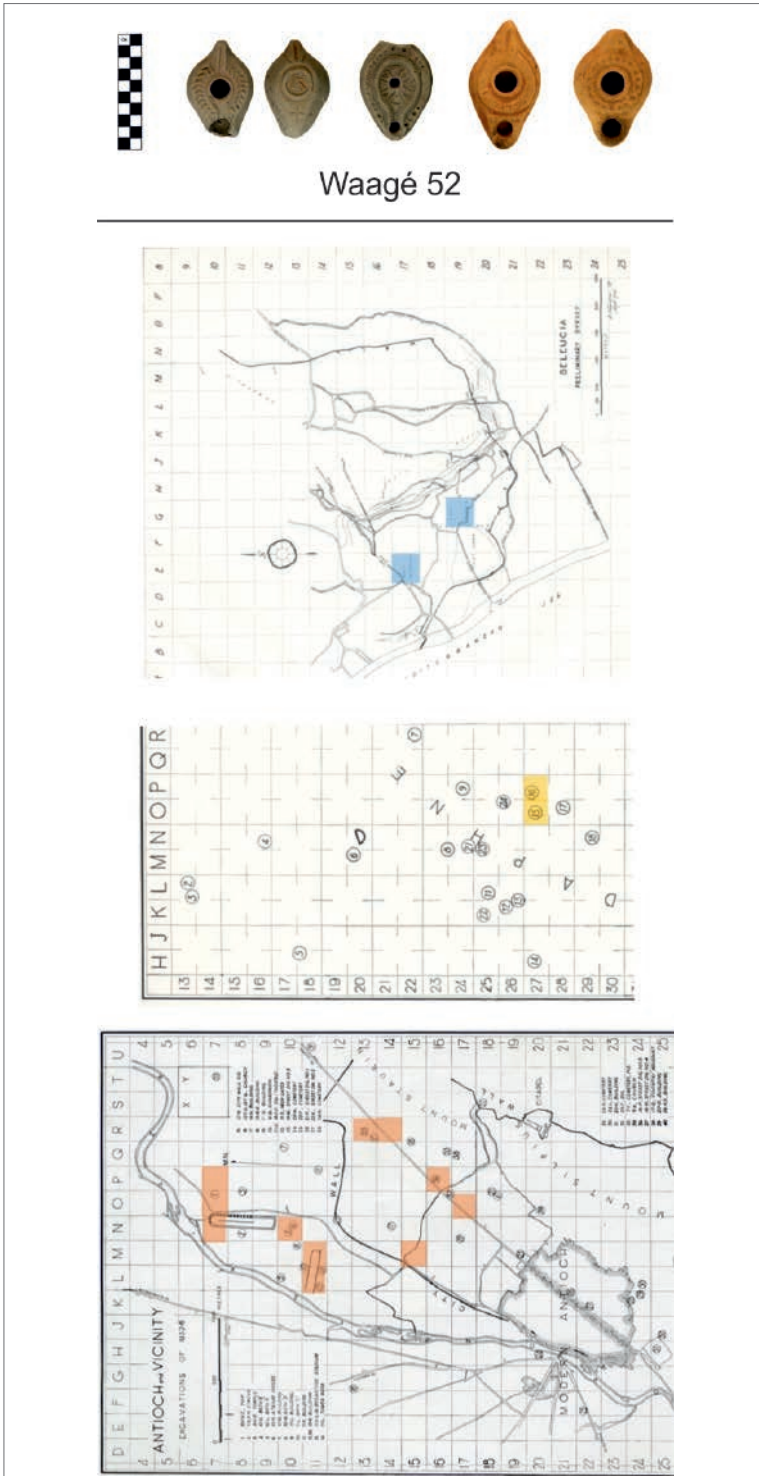


Fig. 8D. Distribution of lamp finds type Waagé 52 in the excavated sectors at (from left) Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Daphne and Seleucia Pieria (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)



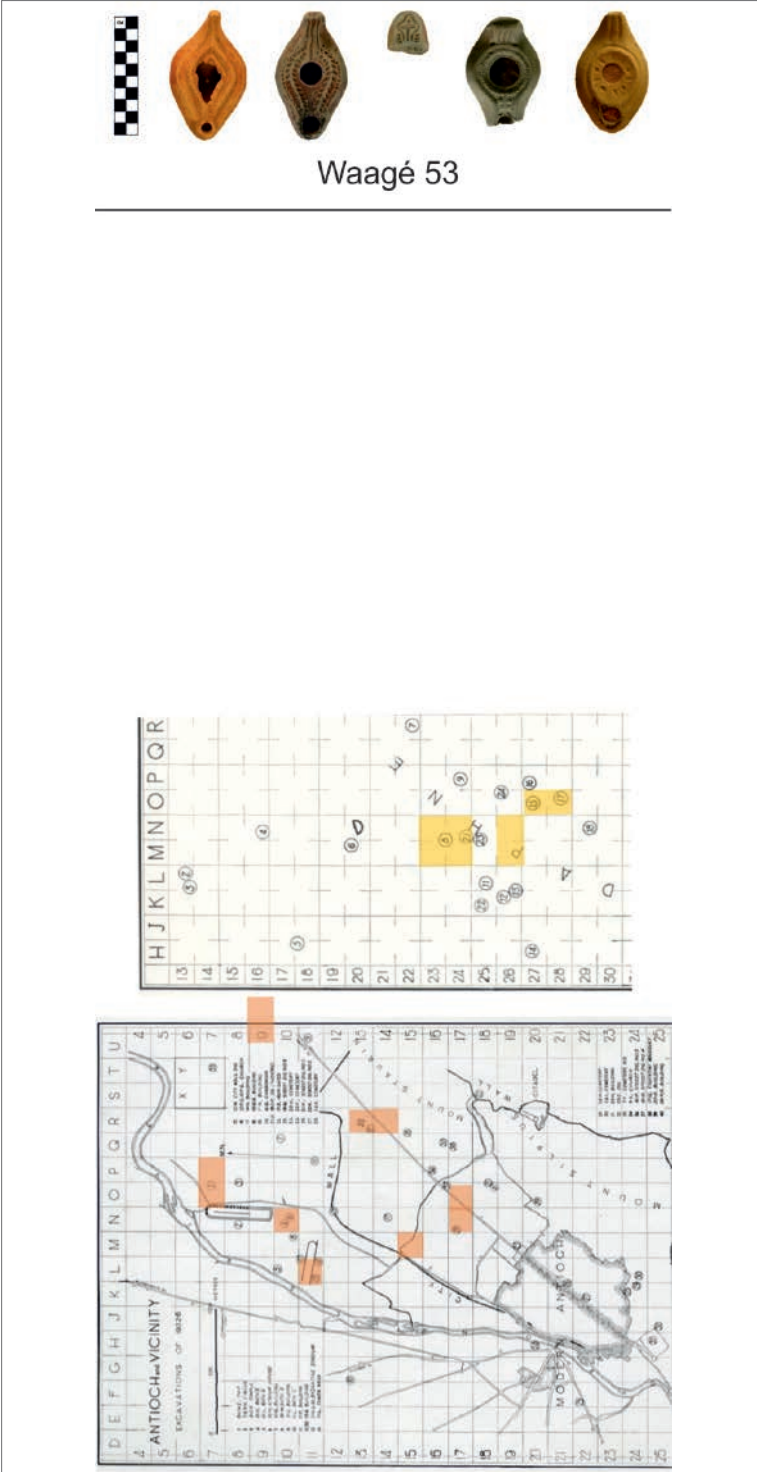


Fig. 8E. Distribution of lamp finds type Waagé 53 in the excavated sectors at (from left) Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Daphne (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

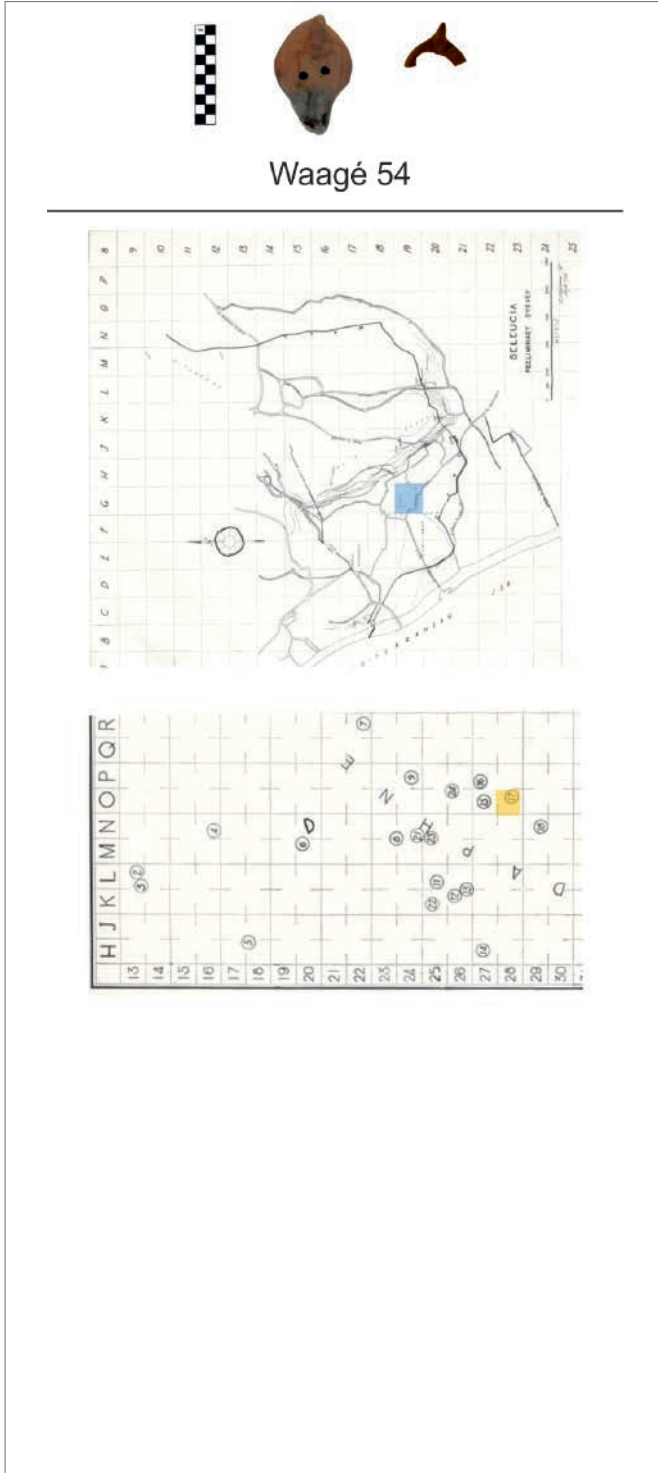


Fig. 8F. Distribution of lamp finds type Waagé 54 in the excavated sectors at (from left) Daphne and Seleucia Pieria (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

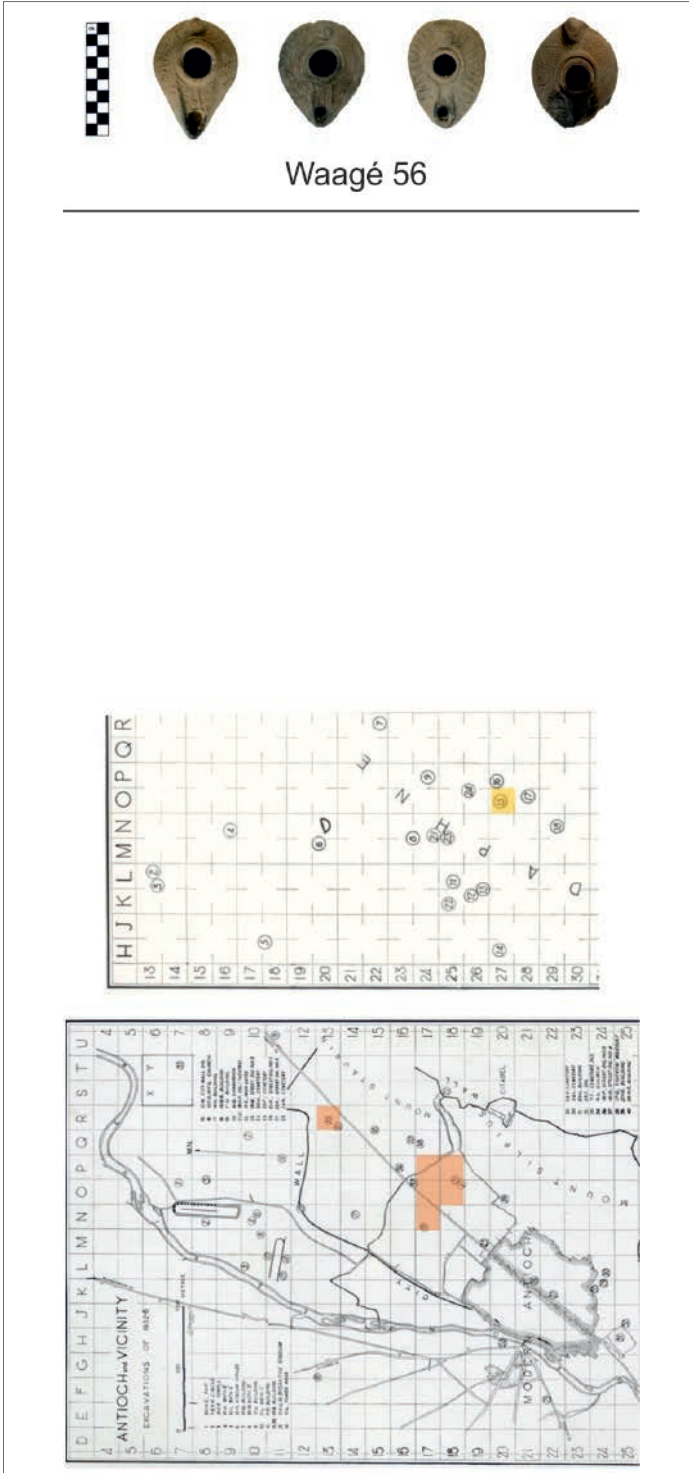


Fig. 8G. Distribution of lamp finds type Waagé 56 in the excavated sectors at (from left) Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Daphne (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum | photo A. Eblighatian)

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