

A UNIQUE DEPICTION OF A PASSAGE FROM OVID'S *FASTI* ON A LAMP FOUND IN A GRAVE AT FORUM IULII (FRÉJUS, FRANCE)

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Abstract: The article focuses on a special artifact found among the funerary offerings in a pyre grave discovered at the Pauvadou necropolis of Forum Iulii (Fréjus, southern France). It is a unique North African lamp made in the workshops of *Clodius Helianus*. The decoration of the discus presents a theme never before encountered on oil lamps, namely, a scene from Ovid's *Fasti* depicting the conclusion of a story about the luckless Pan attempting to take advantage of the queen Omphale in her sleep. Choosing the wrong bed, he finds Hercules there instead of Omphale. In the depicted scene, the couple is laughing, while Hercules generously holds up the god, who is still recovering from the shock of his short struggle with Hercules. The context of the grave is also briefly discussed.

Rezumat: Articolul se concentrează asupra unui artefact excepțional găsit printre ofrandele funerare ale unui mormânt de incinerare descoperit în necropola Pauvadou de la Forum Iulii (Fréjus, sudul Franței). Este vorba despre opaiț nord-african unic, realizat în atelierile lui Clodius Helianus. Decorul discului prezintă o temă nemaîntâlnită până acum pe lămpile cu ulei, și anume o scenă din *Fasti* de Ovidiu, care descrie finalul unei povești despre nefericitul Pan care încearcă să profite de regina Omphale în somn. Alegând patul greșit, el îl găsește pe Hercule în loc de Omphale. În scena descrisă, cuplul râde, în timp ce Hercule îl sprijină cu generozitate pe zeu, care încă își revine din șocul scurtei sale lupte cu Hercule. Contextul mormântului este, de asemenea, discutat pe scurt.

Keywords: Forum Iulii, Necropolis, Roman lamp, Iconography, Hercules, Omphale, Pan.

Cuvinte cheie: Forum Iulii, Necropolă, Opaiț roman, Iconografie, Hercule, Omphale, Pan.

THE CONTEXT: TOMB 113 FROM THE PAUVADOU NECROPOLIS AT FRÉJUS (C. GÉBARA)

Forum Iulii was founded by Julius Caesar around 49 BCE on a site located at the mouth of the Argens river in eastern Provence, between the Maures and Estérel mountains. One of the main naval bases of the imperial fleet in the western Mediterranean, the city enjoyed the status of a Roman colony and territorial capital (*civitas*), and in 29-27 BCE veterans of the Legio VIII were settled there. The port's

privileged geographical position and strategic importance contributed to its economic prosperity based on a thriving land and sea trade. Its population, built around a core of settlers of Italian origin, came from different backgrounds linked to a local tribal substratum that had been either subordinated or assimilated, namely, the Deciates, Suelterians and Oxybians.

As in all Roman cities, the space reserved for the dead was located on the town peripheries. Two necropolises, Pauvadou and Saint-Lambert, were discovered to the north and east of the ancient city walls. Excavations took place between 1982 and 1987.

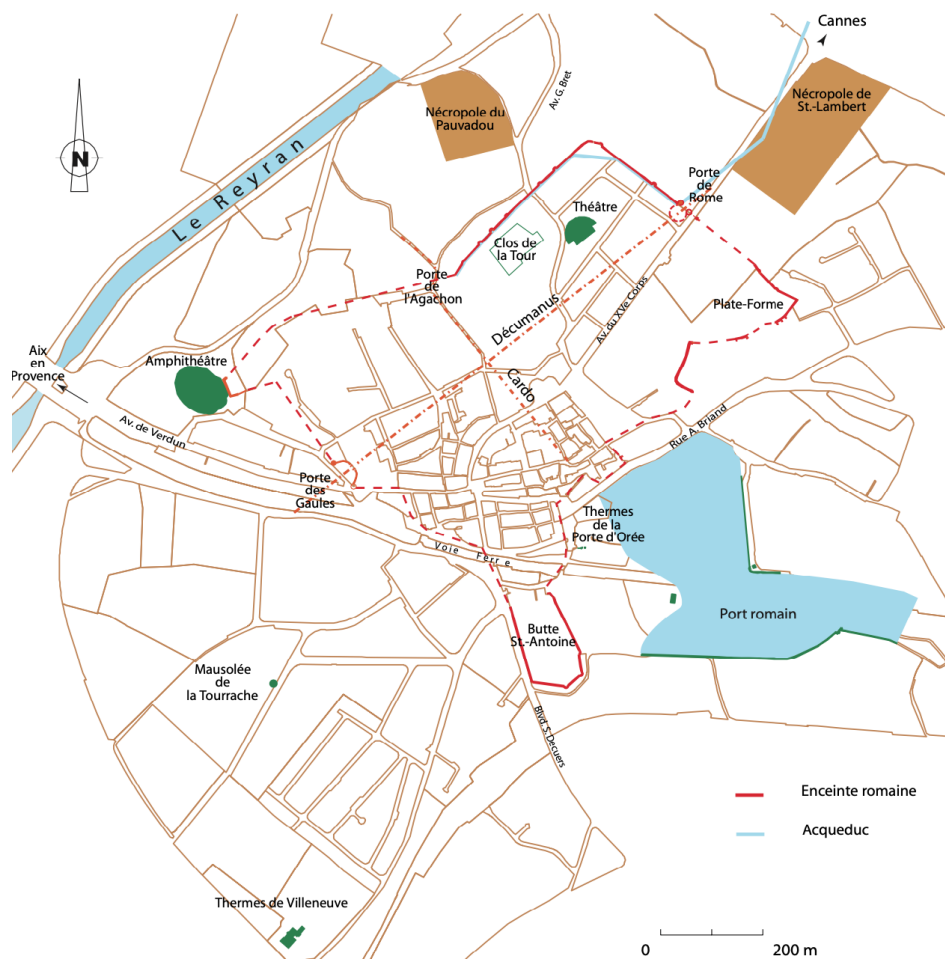


Fig. 1. Location of the two necropolises on the city map @ C. Gébara, F. Laurier.

Tomb 113 is a pyre tomb (primary cremation structure) situated in the central part of the Pauvadou necropolis. The date of the burial is between 100 and 150 CE. It was richly furnished, but because it was partly disturbed by a construction trench dug at the same time as the emergency excavation, the precise position of many of the offerings could not be ascertained.



Fig. 2. Tomb 113 upon discovery © C. Gébara.

The cremation took place inside an irregular, subquadrangular pit dug in the ground, at least 1.20 m long and 1.10 m wide. Two zones could be distinguished on the oxidized bottom of the pit: the first, marked by a charcoal-rich deposit, located at the northern end, the second, nearer to the centre, consisting of burnt bone remains and charcoal, as well as some burnt animal bones. Among the bones was a pig's lumbar vertebra. The human bone remains belonged to a single adult of undetermined sex.

Grave furnishings were heaped around a large jug found on top of the cremated remains; the jug was used as a funerary urn (no. 1). To the east were two broken ceramic footed bowls (nos. 3-4), to the west, a clay oil lamp (no. 2), also fragmented, a bronze needle (no. 5) and a large square iron nail (no. 6). Other finds from the pit included iron nails (nos. 7-8), one still with a fragment of burnt bone stuck to it, and another clay oil lamp (no. 9), but their original position could not be specified. An abundance of finds was grouped in the other part of the pit. Three jugs were standing upright, one to the north (no. 19), another to the east (no. 12) and the third to the west (no. 11). To the south, two fragmented footed bowls (nos. 13 and 14) lay under one of

the two bowls described above (no. 3) and under them a clay lamp (no. 15) and probably another one (no. 10). In addition, a large bronze nail (no. 18) was found to the west of one of the fragmented bowls (no. 14). A glass *balsamarium* (no. 16) lay on a patch of charcoal, leaning against one of the jugs (no. 19), with two other fragments of a glass object (no. 17) to the north of this jug.

The four bowls grouped alongside the western edge of the pit seem to have been broken ritually, probably thrown into the pit after a libation had been performed for the dead. The four oil lamps in the pit, especially the two lying under bowls nos 13 and 14, contribute to an interpretation of the funerary ritual that took place at this tomb.

THE LAMPS¹ (L. Chrzanovski)

a. Lamps from the set of offerings in the central part of the pit

Lamp 1

The first lamp (T113, no. 2), found together with a bronze needle and a large, square-sectioned iron nail lying on top of it, is a late version of a standard African lamp of Loeschcke type VIII/Bussièrre type D.II.2/Bonifay type 4c, to be dated during the whole second half of the second century CE.

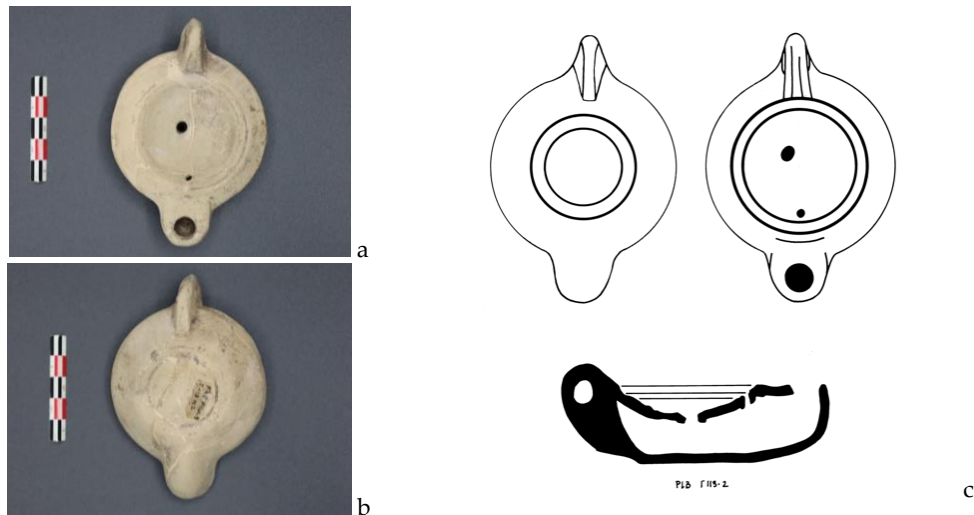


Fig. 3. a-c: Lamp no. 1 (T113, n.2). Drawings © Direction du Patrimoine – Département du Var; pictures © Direction de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine, Ville de Fréjus.

¹ Abbreviations used for the dimensions of the lamps: L. = length of the lamp body; L. (with handle) = total length of the lamp including the handle; W. = Width of the lamp body; H. = Height of the lamp body; H. (with handle) = total height including the handle.

Characteristics: Light brown clay; dark brown slip, almost entirely worn; dimensions: L. (with handle)=10.30 cm; L.=9.00 cm; W=7.2 cm; H. (with handle)=4.20 cm; H.=2.70 cm.

Description: Lamp with rounded nozzle, set off by an impressed line terminating in an impressed dot on either side. Slightly concave shoulder. Deep, plain discus, framed by a double ring; filling hole slightly off-centre and a small air hole pierced just inside the ring, next to the nozzle. Bottom slightly depressed inside a low ring base. Moulded handle, pierced, bearing two lengthwise grooves.

Lamp 2

The second lamp (T113, n. 9), found together with iron nails in a spot that could not be precisely located, is a common version of a standard African lamp of Loeschcke type VIII/Bussi re type D.II.2/Bonifay type 4a, from the second century CE.

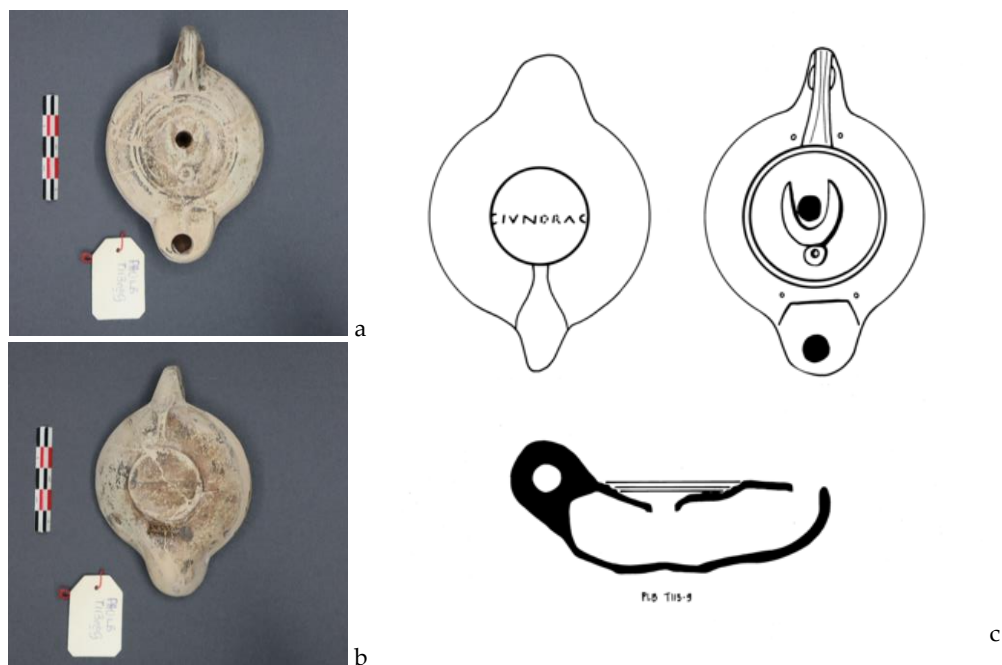


Fig. 4. a-c. Lamp n. 2 (T113, n.9). Drawings   Direction du Patrimoine – D partement du Var; pictures   Direction de l'Arch ologie et du Patrimoine, Ville de Fr jus.

Characteristics: Light brown clay; dark brown slip; dimensions: L. (with handle)=10.70 cm; L.=9.00 cm; W=7.30 cm; H. (with handle)=4.30 cm; H.=2.80 cm.

Description: Lamp with rounded nozzle, set off by an impressed line terminating in an impressed dot on either side. Slightly concave shoulder. Double concentric rings framing a deep discus adorned with a closely-spaced lunar crescent and dotted circle. Filling hole inside the crescent, off-centre. Circular base, slightly concave in the center,

a mark in Latin: CIVNDRAC, impressed on it. Moulded handle, pierced, marked with a double groove; an impressed dot on the shoulder on either side of it.

Iconography: Crescent moon on a globe.

The crescent moon on a dotted circle, also described in the literature as a “pendant” or “amulet”, is a very popular motif on Italian, African and Iberian lamp products. In Gaul, it is to be found on lamps from a batch attributed to Caius Clodius, discovered on the Sainte-Marguerite 2 wreck off the coast of Cannes, and it was copied unchanged by workshops at Montans (Tarn).

Mark: CIVNDRAC is the mark of the workshops of Caius Iunius Draco, of which two main ateliers are located in Proconsular Africa (the largest in present-day Tunisia and the second in Tripolitania), as well as, most probably, subsidiary workshops in Mauritania. Their activity is well defined, between 120 and 200 CE. The factories of Caius Iunius Draco, as well as those of his two African contemporaries, Caius Iunius Alexis and Marcus Novius Iustus, were veritable industries, flooding with their products markets in the capital, the western and southern Mediterranean provinces and the major centres of Gallia and Germania.

Bibliography for the iconography: Bussière 2000, motif I.b.7.4, pp. 165-166, with references to all known parallels; Casas i Genover, Soler i Fusté 2006, pp. 84-85; Épave de Sainte-Marguerite 2: Pollino 1994, n. 81, p. 184; Montans workshops: Bergès 1989, n. 219, p. 91 and fig. 41.

Bibliography for the mark: Bailly 1962, p. 89; Sotgiu 1968, pp. 74-77; Bailey 1988, p. 98; Bonnet 1988, pp. 97-106; Bussière 2000, pp. 144, 223; Casas I Genover, Soler Fusté 2006, pp. 49-50; see in particular Haley 1990.

b. Lamps from the set of offerings in the western part of the pit

Despite its fragmentariness the lamp (no. 15) found under the two broken footed bowls can be classified as a late version of a standard African lamp of Loeschcke type VIII/Bussière type D.II.2/Bonifay type 4c, dated to the second half of the second century CE.

Lamp no. 3 (T113, n.15)

Characteristics: Light brown clay; dark brown slip, almost entirely worn. L. 2.97 cm (max., fragment of nozzle), H. 2.17 cm; H. (with handle) 3.76 cm

Description: Two elements of a lamp: part of a rounded nozzle and a moulded handle, pierced and marked with two grooves.



Fig. 5. Lamp n. 3 (T113, n.15) Drawings © Direction du Patrimoine – Département du Var.

Lamp no. 4 (T. 113, n. 10)

The second lamp (no. 10), found near the first one, is a standard version of North African lamps with a shoulder adorned with bunches of grapes, vine leaves and tendrils, belonging to Loeschke type VIII/Bussière type D.X.5/Bonifay type 12, dated from 150 to 225 CE.



Fig. 6. a-b. Lamp n. 4 (T. 113, n. 10); Drawings © Direction du Patrimoine – Département du Var ; picture © P. Folliot.

Characteristics: Yellowish beige clay with sandy inclusions; dark orange to brown slip, almost entirely worn; L=10.27 cm, L. (with handle)=11.90 cm, W=8.66 cm, H=2.89 cm, H. (with handle)=3.59 cm (max.).

Description: Lamp with rounded nozzle, set off by a semicircular line. Slightly concave shoulder, adorned with bunches of grapes, vine leaves and tendrils. Relief

ring between grooved concentric circles framing a large, deep discus. Discus adorned with a scene including Omphale, Hercules and Pan. A small air-hole pierced in the discus below the scene. The base depressed, inside a low base ring accentuated by a groove on the inside. Schematic V-shaped motif with scrolling ends incised on the base at right angle to the lamp's line of symmetry, simple V-shaped motif under the handle. The mark CHELIAN incised in the centre of the base. Moulded handle (upper part broken), pierced, two grooves incised on its top.

Iconography: This scene, for which there is no known parallel, depicts a passage from Ovid's *Fasti* (II, 2, 303-308*). Hercules is depicted accompanying Omphale "to the Tmolus, all planted with vines, forests of Bacchus". The Queen decides to spend the night in a cave, which her servants have carefully prepared. She exchanges clothes with Hercules, who soon finds himself naked, as Omphale's shoes, tunic and wraps are far too tight for him. After the meal, they both lie down in separate beds, so as to be pure the next day and offer "a sacrifice at daybreak to the inventor of the vine". Pan, who has been watching the couple since their arrival, waits until they are both asleep before attempting to take advantage of Omphale. Deceived by the bristly hair of the Nemean lion's skin covering Omphale's bed, he thinks he will find the object of his desires in the other bed that is covered with "soft, fine cloth". But here he falls into a trap: "he begins to lift the tunic slightly; the legs it covers are bristly, and all covered with rough hair"... for it is indeed Hercules that the luckless god has disturbed. Awakened, Hercules pushes him off and Pan falls back with a loud noise. Omphale "calls for her women, asks for torches, and the torches that have just been brought in light up the scene". Pan, for his part, "groans, all bruised from his heavy fall, and barely lifts his crumpled limbs from the ground".

Having discovered what has happened, Hercules and Omphale laugh heartily. * Quotes translated from M. Nisard (ed. et trad.) "*Ovide, Fastes II: Février*", Paris 1857.

It is this final moment of the myth that the workshops of Caius Helianus have immortalised in this scene: the action takes place in front of the grotto where the couple have taken up residence for the night, which is rendered as a temple with a tympanum and a four-column portico (a), situated in the heart of a gigantic vineyard of Tmolus, here rendered as a vine with a characteristic leaf on one branch (b).

Moreover, the choice of the type of lamp and, therefore, of the shoulder decoration, alternating vine leaves and bunches of grapes on branches, is particularly judicious, since these motifs, in addition to the vine represented on the medallion, create an allusion to the sacrifice that the protagonists in the scene wish to make to Bacchus.

A naked Omphale, on the left, is leaning out of the temple, letting an extinguished torch fall to the ground on her right (c). She turns her head towards Hercules, who is shown standing centre stage. The hero, emerging from the building

in the simplest of garb, has his body and head turned towards Omphale, with whom he exchanges looks, while supporting a staggering Pan with his left arm, his hand firmly on the god's back. Pan, on the right, is holding on to Hercules with his left arm, while turning his face away from the laughing lovers and toward the viewer. Interestingly, two of the legs of Hercules' bed can be observed in the background, standing on a carefully rendered ground line; the first is between Hercules' legs and the second between Pan's (d).



Fig. 7. Detail of the discus of the lamp. Graphic elaboration © Laurent Chrzanovski.

Mark: CHELIAN is a mark of the workshop of Caius Helianus, located in Proconsular Africa and active between 175 and 220/225 CE. However, the chronology of this workshop is still far from clear, especially as regards the first phase of its operation. In fact, unlike the long lists of lamps belonging to better-known North African factories, only a very few with the mark CHELIAN are known. Above all, only a handful come from well-defined stratigraphic contexts: dated between 200 and 220 CE, they could at most indicate a flourishing peak in the workshop's production (and not its whole period of activity as suggested by Jean Bussièrè).

Lastly, it should be noted that the chronological range chosen by Bussièrè refers to the work of Jean Deneauve, who places the CHELIAN mark among those of his "second group" of great African workshops (i.e., factories that began their activity in the second century CE), succeeding the group of "first factories", among which the one of Caius Iunius Draco is one of the better known.

Bibliography for the mark: Deneauve 1969, pp. 84–86; Bussièrè 2000, p. 221; Bémont, Chew 2007, p. 406; Sanciu 2011, p. 186; Corda, Perra 2022, p. 240.

CONCLUSIONS

As said above, the rich offerings, numbering no less than four lamps, and their positioning within the pit of pyre grave T113 from the Pauvadou necropolis reflect a specific funerary ritual performed in honour of the dead. This grave is in itself a very important discovery among the whole group of graves from the necropolis of Forum Iulii and will be the subject of further discussion.

The grave has turned out to be important for another reason as well, because one of the lamps that have been recorded from this burial has turned out to be the source of much new information. For one, it has added yet another example to the repertoire of scenes from literary sources, enriching the highly eclectic and rare selection of representations of myths and fables on oil lamp discuses. This repertoire is made up almost exclusively of original creations issuing from the workshops of Rome, Africa, Asia Minor and the Aegean world. And secondly, the grave context has contributed significantly to a revisiting of the dates of the workshop of Caius Helianus. It can now be said with certainty that the beginning of operations of this workshop are earlier than generally proposed, hence probably around 175 CE and not 200 CE; the latter date is an old proposition, not supported by sufficient stratigraphic data.

Aknowledgements

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