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## ROMAN OIL LAMPS WITH *PELTAE* RELIEF ON THE BASE. NEW EVIDENCE FROM APSAROS (GONIO, GEORGIA)

### Abstract

Discovery of two lamps at the Roman fort of Apsaros (Gonio, Georgia) offers further insights concerning adaptation of the *pelta* motif on Roman lamps. Inquiry into the nature of the ornaments on the base – previously unknown in Colchis – leads to conclusions about the possible influx of goods to the fort located on the outskirts of the Roman Empire.

### Keywords

terracotta lamps, *peltae*, iconography, base marks, Colchis, Roman Empire

Recent excavations at the Roman fort at Apsaros (Georgia) brought to light two terracotta lamps adorned with three evenly distributed *pelta* shapes on the base<sup>1</sup>. This type of decoration of the lamp base had previously been unknown in Colchis, therefore, conclusions regarding its chronology and potential provenance yield new information concerning exchange and movement of everyday goods in the coastal fort of Apsaros and, in a broader context, its history and the connections of the whole region with other areas of the Roman Empire, especially with Asia Minor [Fig. 1].

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Fig. 1. Plain-discus lamp found at Apsaros. *Peltae* on the base Group 1. Photo: M. Jaworska. Elaborated: P. Jaworski

The association of *pelta* with Anatolia is by no means unusual since, in literary and iconographic sources, the *pelta* shield was an attribute of Amazons and the people of Asia Minor and Thrace<sup>2</sup>. *Pelta* (πέλτη) was a small, light shield consisting of wooden frames covered with leather, used by the foot warriors called *peltastai* (πέλταστάι). It was usually depicted as a semi-circular shape with two volute-like or pointed endings. As seen in various examples of vase paintings, *peltae* could be decorated with circles or with more elaborated schemes such as the Gorgoneion, lions, quails, and rosettes<sup>3</sup>.

Representations of the *pelta* motif were quite common in ancient art, therefore it can be found on various media. One can distinguish two basic contexts of its depiction. For one thing, *pelta* is placed in figural scenes, usually as a character's attribute (e.g. an Amazon) or as a spatial supplement in a complex composition. Examples of such use can be seen in the Parthenon friezes depicting Amazonomachy or on ancient vases featuring the death of Penthesilea. Secondly, *peltae* are used as a geometric ornament, the best examples of which include mosaics with borders or

<sup>2</sup> Burckhardt 2007, p. 715; Lammert 1937, p. 406; Smith 1884, pp. 750-751.

<sup>3</sup> Chase 1902, see motifs III.7; XCIII.5; CXIX.26.27; CLXVI.6; CCIX.1.2.

sarcophagi walls decorated by it. These two patterns of *pelta* iconography are observed in both high art, handicraft, and everyday products, such as ceramic vessels and terracotta lamps.

## THE *PELTA* MOTIF ON ROMAN LAMPS

With respect to *pelta* motif on Roman lamps<sup>4</sup>, the two patterns of the iconographic scheme (in figural scenes and as an ornament) are employed in a manner similar to the ancient media mentioned above. The scenes in which *peltae* are used as an attribute are usually located on the discus or the handle shield, while *peltae* as a geometric ornament are applied to other elements of the lamp such as the rim, the nozzle or the base.

The basic iconographic subjects involving *peltae* as an element of discus decoration are various scenes with the Amazons and so-called military friezes<sup>5</sup>. Those representations are found on various types of lamps covering a vast period from approximately the first to the fourth century. Less common are lamps characteristic for the Athenian production, with the representations of *pelta* crossed with a double axe, a spear or the *pelekys* pattern on discuses dated to the third - fourth century<sup>6</sup>.

Use of *pelta* as a geometric design is quite popular on lamps, where *peltae* serve as an ornament to decorate the rim<sup>7</sup>. The most common pattern appears on Broneer type XXVIII<sup>8</sup>, in which rim is adorned with rows of raised dots terminating with a *pelta* at the nozzle. Those so-called plain ovule-and-volute lamps<sup>9</sup> are dated to the third to early fifth century.

A less popular use of *pelta* in the rim pattern is seen in the so-called military frieze<sup>10</sup> known from Loeschke type II lamps<sup>11</sup> dated to the second to third century<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The term "Roman lamps" is used for oil lamps dated to the Roman Period, regardless of their actual place of manufacture within the Roman Empire.

<sup>5</sup> With examples found in various regions of the Roman Empire such as Corinth: Slane 1990, p. 31, no. 33; Pannonia: Iványi 1935, pp. 72-73, nos. 534-535, 538; Athens: Perlzweig 1961, p. 132, no. 1036; p. 133, no. 1067; p. 135, no. 1120; no. 1122; p. 148, no. 1620; Argos: Bovon 1966, p. 48, no. 258; Smyrna: Alper 2018, p. 126, no. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Perlzweig 1961, p. 135, nos. 1120-1122.

<sup>7</sup> Athenian Agora: Perlzweig 1961, p. 112, no. 651; Corinth: Slane 1990, p. 33, no. 49; p. 31, no. 33; Merida: Rodríguez Martín 2002, Fig. XX, no. 19; Athens: Karivieri 1996, pp. 195-196, nos. 114-116.

<sup>8</sup> Broneer 1930, pp. 225-226, Fig. 48.20.

<sup>9</sup> Karivieri 1996, pp. 195-196, nos. 114-116.

<sup>10</sup> Rodríguez Martín 2002, p. 24, no. 4.

<sup>11</sup> For the typology see: Loeschke 1919.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, pp. 221-222.

In their case, the rim ornamentation consists of alternately arranged *peltae* and double axes<sup>13</sup>. A cursory analysis of military-themed decorations of discuses and rims of Roman lamps suggests a connection concerning the combination of the *pelta* motif with a double axe<sup>14</sup>. Another noteworthy piece of ornamentation is a *pelta*-shaped volute at the nozzle of an Athenian lamp dated to third-fourth century<sup>15</sup>.

The above-mentioned representations of the *pelta* motif on the upper lamp sections are mostly decorative and symbolic features, whereas *peltae* on the base constitute an additional value as a source of information on lamp industry. In that context, *peltae* occur alone as a potter's mark or as a relief with various accompanying signatures and stamps. Although a number of scholars have studied this subject<sup>16</sup>, no specific research devoted exclusively to the *pelta* relief has been carried out.

### LAMPS WITH THE *PELTA* RELIEF ON THE BASE

Two main groups of *peltae* can be found on lamp bases: either incised single *pelta* or multiple (three) in relief<sup>17</sup>. It is worth noting that single *peltae* are most commonly found on multi-nozzle lamps attributed to the first and second century, whilst three raised *peltae* occur on four types of lamps, dated to mid-first to early third century, with the majority dated between latter half of the first to the first half of the second century.

Specimens with incised *peltae* are quite commonly found on multi-nozzle lamps with examples from Italy and the province of Pannonia, but are less frequently seen on other kinds of lamps, such as the round and pinecone lamps from Cosa<sup>18</sup>.

All lamps with incised *peltae* found in Pannonia<sup>19</sup> have three rounded nozzles with small circles at the top, a rim decorated with an ovule and a shield handle. The discuses of all three lamps bear a representation of the Luna bust in two variants. In the first one, the bust of the goddess has a crescent shape underneath and is located between two stars. In the second representation, Luna is depicted *en face* between two peacock feathers<sup>20</sup>, with a crescent moon in the background. Underneath the goddess, there is a hardly identifiable horizontal shape with cuts. In all

<sup>13</sup> See: Rodríguez Martín 2002, p. 24, no. 4 and rim pattern 19 on pl. XX.

<sup>14</sup> This matter requires further investigation which exceeds the scope of this study.

<sup>15</sup> Perlzweig 1961, p. 112, no. 670.

<sup>16</sup> Bussière and Lindros Wohl 2017, p. 121; Perlzweig 1961, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> Apart from *pelta* on the base, there is also an example of using *pelta* in relief as a handle ending; see Perlzweig 1961, p. 117, no. 751.

<sup>18</sup> Fitch and Goldman 1994, pp. 152-153, Bailey type O: no. 757; p. 203, Pinecone lamp: no. 1043.

<sup>19</sup> Iványi 1935, pp. 72-73, nos. 534-535, 538.

<sup>20</sup> Or, according to the catalogue, "branches"; cf. Iványi 1935, p. 73, no. 538.

three specimens, the *pelta* covers almost the entire surface of the lamp and is decorated with a central circle consisting of three rings. The composition is completed by a row of circles located along the semi-circular edge of the *pelta* following the sequence of: double ring, single, double, single, double<sup>21</sup>.

From Aquileia<sup>22</sup> comes another example of three-nozzled lamp: with plain discus, two filling holes and an ovule pattern on the rim. Two small circles flank the round nozzle, while the shield handle is missing. The *pelta* mark is similar to the examples from Pannonia with nearly the entire base space covered by a single *pelta* shape. The difference lies in the double rings at each of the three pointy endings of the shield. The *pelta* decoration consists of a centrally placed circle with two rings, surrounded by a row of circles that most probably were evenly distributed alongside the semi-circular edge of the *pelta*<sup>23</sup>. The pattern of circle distribution on one half of the *pelta* shape is as follows: two small circles, one with a double ring, one small and another double ring at the peak of the *pelta* axis<sup>24</sup>.

In the case of the Cosa lamps, one can distinguish a different kind of *peltae* on lamp bases. The first example is a small stamped *pelta* on a round Loeschcke type VIII (Bailey O) lamp with ovule rim decoration, molded pierced handle with two grooves and the discus decorated with a rosette of four pointy petals<sup>25</sup>. The kite-shaped nozzle has two small circles flanking it. The base is surrounded by two rings and has a single small *pelta* located in the centre. The *pelta* itself is decorated only with a small shape resembling a triangle<sup>26</sup>. The lamp is dated to 100-225 AD<sup>27</sup>.

Another example of a new *pelta* arrangement on the base is from a pinecone (Bailey T<sup>28</sup>) lamp, widely dated to 50-225 AD<sup>29</sup>. Two small *peltae* are located on the partially preserved base with a broad ring. Both are placed centrally next to each other<sup>30</sup>.

Considering the examples mentioned above one is tempted to conclude that the main purpose of large *peltae* located on the bases of multi-nozzle lamps was to serve a decorative function. The *pelta* shape harmoniously fits the base of the triple-nozzle lamp structure. In turn, the use of small *pelta* marks on smaller lamps with a single nozzle should be associated with the activities of

<sup>21</sup> Iványi 1935, pl. LXXVII, no. 3 and no. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Di Filippo Balestrazzi 1988, pp. 291-292, no. 797, pl. 119.

<sup>23</sup> Part of the lamp base is indecipherable. Given similar decoration on the above-mentioned lamps from Pannonia, it may be assumed that the circles on the bases were spaced at regular intervals.

<sup>24</sup> Iványi 1935, pl. LXVII, no. 3 and no. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Fitch and Goldman 1994, pp. 152-153, no. 757.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, Fig. 136.

<sup>27</sup> Fitch and Goldman 1994, p. 152.

<sup>28</sup> For the typology see: Bailey 1980.

<sup>29</sup> Fitch and Goldman 1994, p. 203, no. 1043.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, Fig. 136.

the workshop and lamp makers who wanted to sign their products, instead of being interpreted merely as a decorative feature.

The most popular application of the discussed motif on Roman lamp bases took the form of three evenly distributed *peltae* in high relief on a round base. There are three main groups of arrangements that can be distinguished: *peltae* alone (Group 1); *peltae* with stamped *planta pedis* (Group 2), *peltae* with inscriptions and other signs (Group 3). Lamps within each group will be discussed according to the following chronological-typological set: Loeschcke I, Loeschcke IV, Deneauve V G<sup>31</sup>, Loeschcke VIII.

The most popular kind of *pelta* representations are included in Group 1, which is characterised by three evenly distributed *peltae* found in a majority of the so-called ear-lamps (Deneauve V G), to a lesser extent Loeschcke VIII, and Loeschcke IV. One example of Loeschcke type I lamp comes from Pergamon; its discus decorated with a rosette (Heimerl motif 384)<sup>32</sup>. The lamp is dated to the Augustan-Tiberian period and attributed to the Pergamon workshop. A Loeschcke IV lamp of unknown provenance is decorated on the discus with a representation of enthroned Pantheistic female deity (Salus?) offering at an altar coiled by a serpent<sup>33</sup>. In the background, there are various symbols and artefacts. The lamp is dated to the Claudian-Flavian period. Deneauve type V G encompasses lamps found in Smyrna<sup>34</sup>, Miletus<sup>35</sup>, Ephesus<sup>36</sup>, Cosa<sup>37</sup> and the Athenian Agora<sup>38</sup>. They have plain discuses except for a lamp found in Athens, which has a ribbed handle coming from the centre. Each specimen can be dated to the first half of the first century.

Two Loeschcke VIII lamps possess discus ornaments. One of those, found in Herculaneum, has a depiction of enthroned Cybele flanked by lions, with Attis on left and various symbols on right<sup>39</sup>. The other, found in Crete, is adorned with a lion to left and calf's head beneath<sup>40</sup>. While the lamp found in Herculaneum should be dated to the 50-65 AD, the lamp from Crete is attributed to the activity of the Gamos workshop (Group 2, see below). There are references in literature to two more examples where *peltae* are the sole decoration on the base. One comes from the museum in Merida<sup>41</sup> and the other is said to be in the collection

<sup>31</sup> For the typology see: Deneauve 1969.

<sup>32</sup> Heimerl 2001, pp. 97-98, no. 9, plt. 1.9.

<sup>33</sup> Bussière and Lindros Wohl 2017, pp. 121-122, no. 166.

<sup>34</sup> Alper 2018, p. 124, no. 15, plt. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Menzel 1969, p. 46, no. 242, Fig. 19.13.

<sup>36</sup> Miltner 1937, p. 182, no. 82, plt. XI.

<sup>37</sup> Fitch and Goldman 1994, pp. 187-189, no. 987, Fig. 105.

<sup>38</sup> Perlzweig 1961, p. 79, nos. 82-83, plt. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Bisi Ingrassia 1977, plt. XLVIII, 10a and 10b.

<sup>40</sup> Sapouna 1998, p. 193, nos. 274-276, variant of base decoration.

<sup>41</sup> Rodríguez Martín 2002, p. 323, Fig. XXIII.

of Museo delle Terme in Rome<sup>42</sup>. Unfortunately, little additional information is available.

Group 2, i.e. lamps with raised *peltae* with stamped single *planta pedis* on the base, is represented by specimens which are classified chiefly as Loeschcke VIII with few examples of Loeschcke I and IV and Deneauve V G. A Loeschcke type I or IV lamp found in Berenice (Cyrenaica) shows no decoration on the discus but its partially preserved base bears one of three *peltae* and a part of the inscribed [MY]RO in *planta pedis*<sup>43</sup>. The mark should be associated with the Myros workshop, dated to the Neronian-Flavian period<sup>44</sup>. The lamp is presumed to have produced in Italy and dated to the third quarter of the first century. Another variant of the mark in Group 2 is represented by a Loeschcke type IV lamp found in Miletus, whose discus is decorated with a rosette consisting of eight round petals<sup>45</sup>. The base, apart from evenly distributed *peltae*, has an encircled *planta pedis* stamp in the middle. On another lamp from Miletus (Deneauve V G type), the base shows yet another variant of *peltae* with *planta pedis* composition<sup>46</sup>. In this example, a centrally placed footprint mark has unidentified CIEK inscription. *Peltae* with a single, centrally placed *planta pedis* stamp are found on Loeschcke type VIII lamps kept in Museums in Trier<sup>47</sup> and Dobruja<sup>48</sup>. Although both are decorated with the dove on a branch motif, the specimen from Trier lacks the handle which is present in the lamp from Dobruja.

Group 3 consists of lamps with inscriptions and base marks other than *planta pedis*. It is represented by Loeschcke type VIII artefacts and only one example of Deneauve V G. That one example of ear-lamp is arguably a late first-century Italian product<sup>49</sup>. The discus is decorated with a complex scene with enthroned Cybele flanked by standing Mercury and Attis. The Capitoline Triad is represented on the crescent-shaped shield handle. The base is inscribed with OPPI/RES and has three *peltae* in relief. The mark denotes the central Italian workshop of C. Oppius Restitutus which functioned in late Flavian to early Antonine period<sup>50</sup>.

Another variant of Group 3 includes Loeschcke type VIII lamps with heart-shaped nozzles and the inscription GAMOY accompanying three *peltae*. To date, most of the known examples have originated from both parts of the province Crete and Cyrenaica; one example of unknown provenance is to be found at the Mainz Museum. The Gamos workshop was probably Cretan and it is estimated to

<sup>42</sup> An ovule lamp referenced in note 82; see Perlzweig 1961, p. 79.

<sup>43</sup> Bailey 1985, p. 51, no. C344, Fig. 185.

<sup>44</sup> On the Myros workshop see Bailey 1980, p. 98.

<sup>45</sup> Menzel 1969, p. 46, no. 237, Fig. 19.16.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 46, no. 241, Fig. 19.8.

<sup>47</sup> Zeischka 1997, n. pag. no. 137.

<sup>48</sup> Iconomu 1967, p. 72, no. 252, Fig. 111, 120, 222.

<sup>49</sup> Hübinger 1993, pp. 85-86, no. 150.

<sup>50</sup> See C.OPPI.RES in: Bailey 1980, p. 99.

have been active since ca. second century up to the first half of the third century<sup>51</sup>. Lamps with *peltae* and the inscription ΓΑΜΟΥ have at least two motifs in discus iconography: lion to left with a calf's head below on the item found in Crete<sup>52</sup>, Eros with Heracles' club (*Heracliscos*) depicted on the find from Berenice<sup>53</sup> and the artefact at the Museum in Mainz<sup>54</sup>.

Other marks which accompany *peltae* are either Latin or Greek letters, circles or undetermined shapes. A single I incised in the middle of the base – found on lamps from Crete – is associated with the Gamos workshop. Discus decoration of those lamps consists of a rooster<sup>55</sup> to right and the motif of *Heracliscos*<sup>56</sup> known from the examples with the ΓΑΜΟΥ signature. *Alpha* (Α) or *delta* (Δ) in the centre of the base with *peltae* are found on the lamp with plain discus from Pergamon<sup>57</sup> and on the fragment of the bottom half of the lamp from the Athenian Agora<sup>58</sup>. Both fragments are dated to the latter half of the first century. The fragment from Pergamon is attributed to local production while the Athenian artefact described by the general term of “Attic lamps”. Another variant of Group 3 schemes is a centrally placed circle, whether plain or ornamented. Both examples of this kind come from Pergamon. Plain-circle decoration on the base can be seen on the lamp with circles decorating the rim and a trophy motif on the discus (Heimerl motif 155)<sup>59</sup>. The lamp is dated to the latter half of the first – first half of the second century. A stamp with the decorative circle is discernible on the base of the lamp with a plain rim and discus dated to second half of the first century. Originating from Pergamon as well, there is a fragmentarily preserved base showing one of three *peltae* and an illegible sign in the middle, probably an inscription<sup>60</sup>. The fragment is again dated to the latter half of the first - first half of the second century.

The only exception among the representations of three *peltae* on the bases of the Roman lamps discussed above is an example of a triangular Bailey type K lamp from Italy<sup>61</sup>. The unusually shaped lamp has its rim decorated with three new comedy masks. The base is triangular with each corner decorated with *pelta* in relief and probably a double *planta pedis* stamp in the middle. The *pelta* located at the lamp's apex is somewhat narrower than the others. The lamp is dated to the late first century.

<sup>51</sup> For novel conclusions about the workshop's production see Sapouna 1998, pp. 95-103.

<sup>52</sup> Variants in Sapouna 1998, p. 193, nos. 274-276.

<sup>53</sup> Bailey 1985, p. 123, no. C843 with incomplete signature and base fragments no. C848.

<sup>54</sup> Menzel 1969, p. 57, no. 316, Fig. 47.4.

<sup>55</sup> Sapouna 1998, p. 196, nos. 323-324b.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, pp. 25-26, nos. 33-36a.

<sup>57</sup> Heimerl 2001, p. 121, no. 291.

<sup>58</sup> Perlzweig 1961, p. 106, no. 417.

<sup>59</sup> Heimerl 2001, p. 128, no. 369.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, p. 151, no. 659.

<sup>61</sup> Bailey 1980, pp. 250-251, no. Q1119.



All examples of *peltae* have three or two small circles as a decoration. Regardless of the type, the three *peltae* located on the bases must have been served as the lamps feet.

## LAMPS WITH BASE *PELTAE* RELIEF FROM APSAROS

Current literature regarding the lamps found in Apsaros and research conducted at the Batumi and Gonio museums have not yielded any information on the lamps decorated with the discussed motif<sup>62</sup>. Therefore, the latest discoveries of the Polish-Georgian Archaeological Mission show how much new data can be obtained through the analysis of lychnological material [Fig. 2].



Fig. 2. Fragment of an Apsaros lamp with a rosette on the discus. *Peltae* on on the base belong to Group 1. Photo: M. Jaworska. Elaborated: P. Jaworski

<sup>62</sup> Khalvashi and Mamuladze 2017, p. 193; idem 2016, p. 165, pl. 121-122; Gamkrelidze 2014, pp. 70-71; Charkviani 2014, pp. 5-17, nos. 14-17; Sulava 2009, p. 88; Mindorashvili and Mamuladze 2009, p. 78; Kakhidze 2008, Fig. 22; Ebralidze and Mamuladze 2008, pp. 32-39; Ebralidze 2005, pp. 53-66; Seidel 2003, p. 61; Fellmuth 2003, pp. 51-52, Fig. 57; Plontke-Lüning, Fellmuth, and Geyer 2002, p. 112; Mamuladze, Khalvashi and Aslanishvili 2002, pp. 36-37; Kakhidze et alii. 2002, pp. 259-260; Braund 1994, p. 184.

To date, two fragments of lamps with the *pelta* motif on the base have been found in Apsaros<sup>63</sup>. Both lamps belong to Loeschcke type VIII and have three *peltae* on their base. Therefore, they can be assigned to Group 1 (see above). The first lamp is almost fully preserved except for the handle. The discus is plain, with a centrally placed filling hole and plain rim<sup>64</sup>. Of the other lamp, only a half has survived<sup>65</sup>. Adorning the discus is a rosette with round petals. The base is preserved with two out of three *peltae*. In both examples, the base has one ring. The layout of the base *peltae* appears to be random since the lamp with a rosette on the discus has one of the *pelta* shapes located on the axis above the nozzle, unlike the other.

The closest analogy for the lamp with the plain discus would be an example from Pergamon<sup>66</sup>, despite lacking the air hole on the discus and an inscription accompanying the *peltae* on the base. The second lamp does not have such close analogies. Both lamps should be associated with the workshops from Asia Minor – either as imported products or local imitations dating from the second half of the first century to mid-second century<sup>67</sup>.

In conclusion, one of the main questions that arises is how the *pelta* motif on the bases reached Colchis? The natural answer would be the cabotage trade and the supply system along the Black Sea coast. However, given the proposed dating of the lamps from Apsaros, the influx of such lamps to the fort/region should be associated with the supply of Roman troops stationed in Apsaros or with the deployment of legions taking part in some military activities. Each movement of the army brought with it an inflow of various kinds of goods and men who were able to make them. Consequently, the lamps could have arrived there *via* both land and maritime trade and supply routes.

Finally, lamps with *peltae* on the base may have reached the fort of Apsaros as a result of several historical events taking place in the region: the reconstruction of the fort during Nero's reign, the suppression of the Anicetus revolt in Colchis under Vespasian, and the Parthian wars waged by Trajan and later Marcus Aurelius<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Excavations conducted by Prof. Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski (PL) and Shota Mamuladze (GE). On the recent discoveries see: Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski and Shota Mamuladze 2019, pp. 63-76.

<sup>64</sup> The lamp was discovered in 2016. Inv. GA16/172.

<sup>65</sup> The lamp discovered in 2019. Inv. GA19/7.

<sup>66</sup> Heimerl 2001, p. 121, no. 291. See above.

<sup>67</sup> Archaeometric analysis of clay samples from both lamps is planned in the near future.

<sup>68</sup> I would like to thank dr Jaworski for the information on the history and chronology of the fort in Apsaros.

**ROMAN OIL LAMPS WITH *PELTAE* RELIEF ON THE BASE.  
NEW EVIDENCE FROM APSAROS (GONIO, GEORGIA)**

**Summary**

Lamps with the base decorated with a *pelta* pattern, found at the Roman fort of Apsaros, provide a point of departure for discussing the iconography and types of application of this motif on Roman lamps. It was determined that the *peltae* were used in two ways: as an attribute, i.e. a decorative element in figural scenes, or as a geometric ornament. More complicated compositions are represented on the discus, while geometric motifs with *peltae* were used on other parts of the lamp, mainly the rim and the base. The most popular type of base relief consisted of three *peltae* on a round base, as exemplified by the mid-first to mid-second century artefacts found in Apsaros. That kind of base decoration can be divided into three groups: three *peltae* only, *peltae* with a *planta pedis* stamp and *peltae* with an inscription or other sign. Lamps from Apsaros can be assigned to the first group. The transmission of the *pelta* motif which enabled it to reach the Colchian fort was due to several factors, the most significant of which – given the dating – were most likely army movements and their supply system.

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