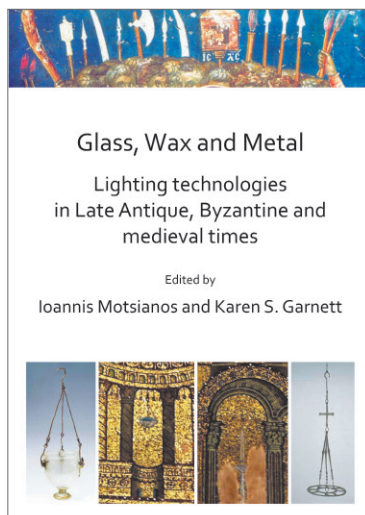


Book reviews

Ioannis Moutsianos, Karen S. Garnett (eds), *Glass, Wax and Metal: Lighting Technologies in Late Antique, Byzantine and Medieval Times*, Oxford (Archaeopress), 2019, 266 pages, ill. Color and b/w
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The volume, which brings together no less than 28 articles (prefaces, introduction and conclusion text excluded), offers a panoptic of themes, materials, periods, geographic and chronological horizons rarely, if ever, reached in lychnological science to date. The articles represent the acts of not one, but two international congresses, organized in collaboration with the International Lychnological Association: the 3rd International ILA Round-Table “History and archaeology of lighting devices in Continental Europe, from late antiquity to the late medieval ages” (Olten, Historisches Museum, September 24–29, 2007) and the 4th International ILA Round-Table “Lighting in Byzantium” (Thessaloniki, Museum of Byzantine Culture, October 11–14, 2011). It is to the credit of the editors who have volunteered their time to bring this publication to fruit.

Having collaborated on the preparation of these congresses and knowing what it means to publish the acts of such conferences, I find it doubly embarrassing to review the volume. Not only because I cannot be totally objective, but also because, as is the case with acts published on a volunteer basis years after the congresses took place, there are weaker texts and illustrations not up to par that can easily be criticized when one is not aware of the background of the publication effort. It is also regrettable that some contributions were withdrawn for speedier publication elsewhere. In addition, while all in all 54 papers were discussed during both congresses, a large part of the texts have been published in the huge volumes accompanying the congresses and



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the exhibitions organized in their honor (L. Chrzanowski and P. Kaiser (eds), *Dark ages? Licht im Mittelalter/L'éclairage au moyen-âge*, Olten–Milano 2007; I. Motsianos and E. Bintsi (eds), *ΜΙΑ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΑΠΟ ΦΩΣ ΣΤΟ ΦΩΣ* / *Light on Light: an illuminating story*, Thessaloniki 2011).

It would have helped reception of the contents had the editors decided to propose proper “sections” or “chapters”. However, despite the impression of a somewhat patchwork arrangement (table of contents on pages i–ii), the book follows a clear sequence. The first part (pp. 1–48) is clearly dedicated to western and northern European lighting phenomena, from late antiquity to late medieval times, with articles by Verena Perko on Slovenia, Thomas Bitterli on Switzerland, Svetlana Avdusina on Russia, Arja Karivieri on Scandinavia, Catherine Vincent on church lighting in France and Lena Berg-Nilsson on mining lamps in Central Europe and Scandinavia. Concluding this section is a brilliant resume by Yvonne Seidel on lighthouses, such as those depicted in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (pp. 49–64).

Next Ioannis Motsianos gives a brilliant introduction to what was happening with lighting in the Eastern Roman Empire, and its successor, the Byzantine Empire.

The following flowering of texts concerns material culture. The presentations cover all of the eastern and southern Mediterranean, as well as the Pontic area (clay, bronze, glass lamps) (pp. 49–183). Sofia Akrivopoulou, Periklis Slampeas and Paraskevi Leventeli unveil lamps from Thessaloniki, Evangelia Angelkou

and Maria Cheimonopoulou describe recent finds from the Episcopal Complex at Louloudies Pierias, whereas Karen S. Garnett and Arja Karivieri deliver information on lamps found respectively at Corinth and Athens. Moving south, Lambrini Koutoussaki discusses late lamps from Argos, Christopher S. Lightfoot the results of his decade-long excavations at Amorium and Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom new typo-chronological and iconographical issues concerning the Holy Land lamps.

Special types are dealt with separately: glass lamps by Anastassios Antonaras and wheel-made lamps by Anastasia Yangaki. Church lighting devices are collected in consecutive articles, written by Stanislav Ryzhov and Tatyana Yashaeva on Chersonesos finds, Mara Verykokou on the Benaki Museum's polycandela, and, finally, candlestick supports from Mount Athos by Paschalis Androudis and Ioannis Motsianos. Mariela Inkova closes the section with a brilliant article on early medieval glazed lamps.

The last two parts collect reflections on the functional and technical aspects of artificial lighting (pp. 184–216) and representations and the architecture of light (pp. 217–235). In the first case, Georgios Velenis and Stavros Zachariadis return to the discussion of function and usage of lamps found in Thessaloniki, Ioannis Motsianos considers the technical difficulties of using glass lamps, but also, in a second text, beeswax making and use. Naama Sukenik and Yotam Tepper present a newly discovered linen wick, which is seldom found essential part of lighting equipment of this kind.

Regarding representations and the architecture of light, there is Pelli Mastora with an article on the famous Rotunda of Thessaloniki and its lighting, real and virtual, Ioannis Iliades on the depiction of lighting devices in church frescoes, and Efterpi Marki on a medieval beacon found at Pieria. The last article, by the author of this review, draws parallels, with all due reserve, between antiquity and medieval times as far as lighting issues are concerned, putting forward ideas that are still part of our present.

The strength of this opus lies in the extraordinary capacity of several authors (at least half) to reach beyond their regular competence “niche”, proposing hypotheses and drawing parallels between different cultures and times, and opening the debate on new issues. Addressing research questions with appropriate illustrations, cautionary notes and relevant bibliographies is much needed in a field where scholars tend to deliver boring and non-exhaustive lists of finds, quoting canonic chronologies, parallels found in “prehistoric” (or pioneering) works edited before the 1980s and bibliographies suffering from the increasing lack of multiple language skills. From this point of view, the editors are once again to be lauded for their efforts, because all the texts but one are in English, making the book and its contents widely accessible around the world.

The article by Karen S. Garnett on the bases of some specific types of Corinthian lamps (pp. 81–89) should become a milestone for the methodology used, while Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom’s review of the typology, iconography and chronology of 4th to 7th century lamps from Israel (pp. 95–102) is a crystal-clear panoptic of the subject, which will be obligatory reading for future researchers.

It is regrettable that the illustrations have been reduced sometimes to a micro-, even nano-scale, presumably because of a wish on the part of the Publisher to “shrink” the volume to 266 pages. This has made it practically impossible to see the plenitude of details presented (even zoomed-up in the electronic version). Practical doxa, such as greyscale pictures of clay lamps to avoid mistakes in printed colors and slightly smaller scale for illustrations that were too large (e.g., pp. 20–27), would have also enhanced the printed presentation.

All this said, this volume is a real treasure presenting the state of research explained simply and briefly, interspersed with discussion of issues concerning methodology, functionality, chronology, influences from far and near, and much more. It will be a perfect companion for scholars starting upon any one of the multiple topics covered in the book, finding the most recent bibliographical lists needed to go in-depth into the chosen subject.

