

Summary

The Practice of Lighting in the Byzantine Period and the Equipment for this Illumination in the Saint Nicholas Church at Demre

Publications containing information about the illumination of churches during the Byzantine period, the equipment for illumination used in these churches, and the system the usage of this equipment constitutes in connection with the architecture are limited. Data on the subject is available mainly in the archives of monasteries and their deeds of trust.

As much as being functional, the oil lamps used in the churches have symbolic meanings. Their employment, especially in liturgies and in funeral places, tend to emphasize this understanding. There is a difference in churches between the illumination arrangements carried out for regular days and on special occasions.

The findings of rich variety uncovered in Saint Nicholas Church excavation at Demre, one of the prominent centers of Christians pilgrimage, reveal important facts about the illumination equipment used during the Byzantine period. Alongside windowpanes that enabled the interiors to be illuminated by daylight, lamps made of glass and terracotta were found there for artificial lighting.

When the findings of glass are considered quantitatively, the majority of them are found to be articles with functional purposes of illumination. Amongst these, windowpanes of different types are found in addition to lamps of various kinds.

Among the equipment for illumination, terracotta lamps constitute a profuse group in regard to their form, motif and style. Findings show a similarity in general to the "lamps of the Anatolian type".

Dating of the works under discussion appears to parallel the dates of the construction periods of the church and its northern extension. Moreover, the similarities of the articles with samples found both in Anatolia and the settlements located in the Mediterranean basin are remarkable. This parallelism may be considered as proof of connections with these regions for Demre used to have a prominent place as a port city and pilgrimage center.