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Two Rosette Stamp Impressions from Tell en-Nasbeh

Tell en-Nasbeh, probably biblical Mizpah of Benjamin, located about 12 km northwest of Jerusalem, yielded a large number of stamp and seal impressions as a result of the excavations of Professor William F. Badè in the 1920s and 1930s. These include 87 LMLK (למלך) impressions, 30 M(W)ṢH (מ(ו)צה) impressions, 24 YH(D) ((יה(ד)) impressions, 1 YRŠLM (ירשלם) impression, 7 animal impressions, and 4 private seal impressions (McCown 1947: 154–67, 169–72; Avigad 1958: 113–19). The stamp impressions cover the entire range of official stamp types from the kingdom of Judah, with one notable exception. No impressions of the rosette type were published, and since about two-thirds of the site had been excavated and McCown's 1947 report appeared to be very complete in its coverage of epigraphic finds, it seemed the site simply lacked this class of impression.

However, two rosette impressions did turn up during ongoing efforts to compile a computerized database of the Tell en-Nasbeh materials; and these are published here for the first time. It is beyond the scope of this short note to go into the chronological and cultural implications of the rosette stamp impressions.

The first impression (fig. 1) was found in surface debris in Square Z24 in the middle of the west side of the tell, and was given Museum Number 1502. It is ca. 17 mm in diameter, is located at the base of a two-ridge handle, and has eight "petals." The handle's exterior surface color is 10YR8/3 (very pale brown) and its subsurface, core, and interior surface are 7.5YR5/0 (gray), according to the Munsell color scheme.

A little more is known about the second impression (fig. 2). It was found in Cistern 156, of Room 60 of Building 177.04 in Square AH20 in the southwest corner of the site (Zorn 1993a: 836–41). This building is assigned to Stratum 3 of the site's revised stratigraphy, which runs from the tenth century B.C.E. to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.[1] The cistern was found covered with a stone slab and the deposit within it was relatively homogeneous, suggesting that it had been cleaned out several times during its use and contained materials only from its final phase. It contained almost complete examples of Assyrian-style bowls (Wampler's Types 1214–1216; pl. 54), high foot lamps (Types 1636, 1638, 1641; pl. 71) and another example of a late Iron Age bowl (Type 1316; pl. 57), as well as other types with longer periods of use. This would seem to indicate that the cistern's final use was in the seventh to sixth century B.C.E., and so suggests a *terminus post quem* for the impression itself.

This second rosette impression was stamped on the wall of a storage jar, high on the shoulder above two grooves running around the circumference of the jar; not enough of the jar survived to determine its type. The impression is ca. 19 mm in diameter and has 11 "petals." For some unknown reason it was not given a Museum number. The jar's exterior and interior surfaces were 5YR5/4

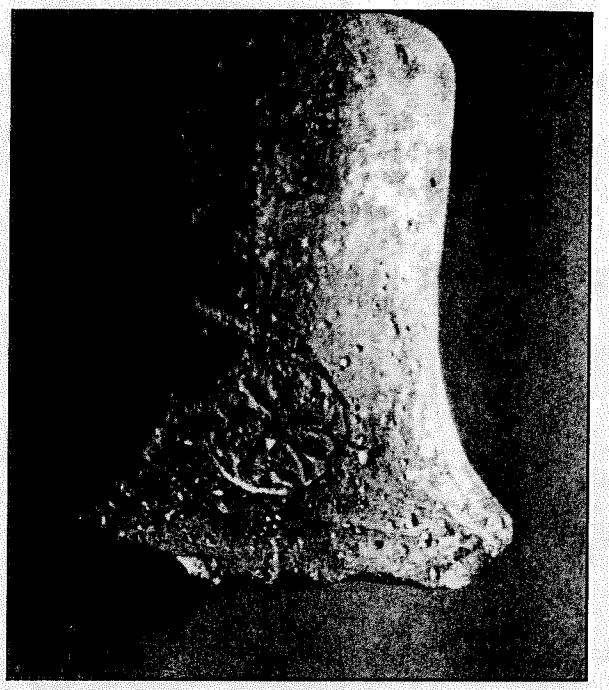

Fig. 1. Rosette stamp impression from Square Z24.

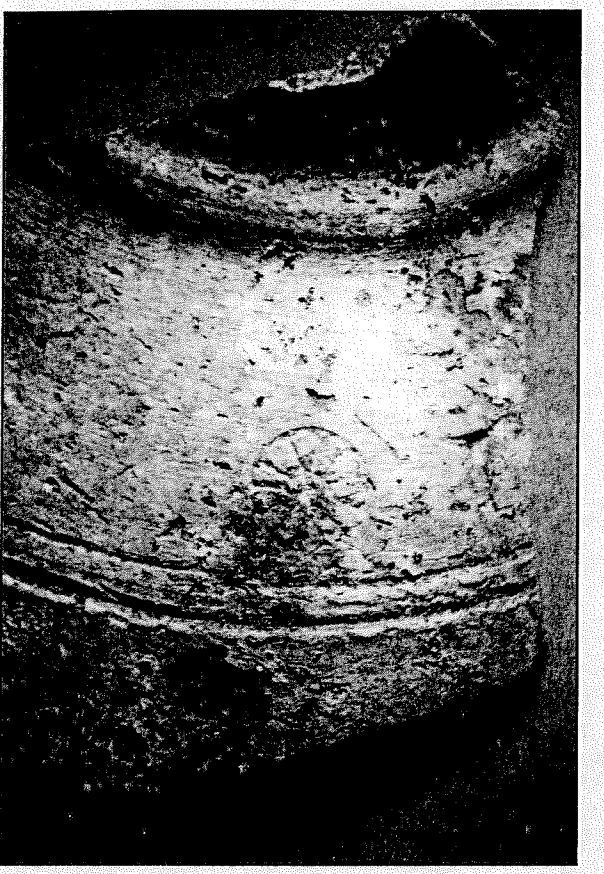

Fig. 2. Rosette stampe impression from Cistern 156.

(reddish brown); its subsurface is 2.5YR5/6 (red). It was not possible to determine the color of the core of the sherd.

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I thank Jane Cahill, who is preparing a definitive publication of the rosette class of stamp impression, for inquiring if any impressions of this type had been found at Tell en-Nasbeh. Her question prompted me to search the computer database of the Tell en-Nasbeh material. I also thank the Badè Institute of Biblical Archaeology for permission to photograph and publish these two impressions, and Walter Aufrecht and Dr. John Hayes for reading and commenting on a draft of this article.

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NOTES

[1]The scheme published in the 1947 report used roman numerals to designate the strata (McCown 179–88). The revised stratigraphy uses Arabic numerals to avoid confusion with the strata of the earlier work. For a summary of the new stratigraphy see Zorn 1993b.

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