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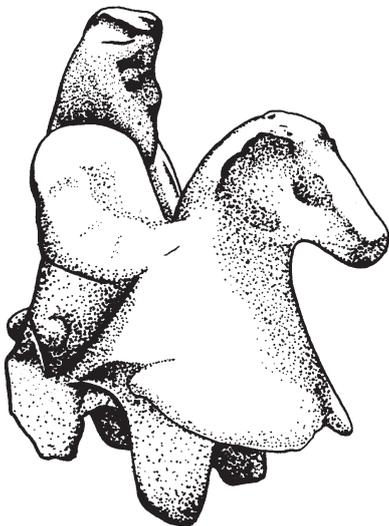
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Christian Frevel, Katharina Pyschny,
Izak Cornelius (eds.)

A "Religious Revolution" in Yehûd?

The Material Culture of the Persian Period
as a Test Case



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Continuity and Change in the Persian Period Judahite Stamped Jar Administration

Oded Lipschits & David S. Vanderhoof

Judean stamped jar handles of the Persian period highlight both continuity and change in the history, administration, archaeology, and paleography of Judah vis-à-vis the foregoing Iron Age and the subsequent Hellenistic Period. This study highlights trends of continuity in the stamped handle system from the time of the Judean kingdom to the Babylonian and then to the Persian and Hellenistic periods. It also acknowledges the main discontinuities. Near the end of the 6th century BCE, Aramaic replaced Hebrew script in the seals and glyptic elements disappeared. Seals naming particular administrators of Judah and Ramat Rahel became the dominant administrative node in the system. Jars were produced in the Jerusalem region, not the lowlands as in the Iron Age. Around the beginning of the 4th century BCE, the system underwent consolidation and only the name yhd or its abbreviation occurs. The consolidation may derive from the importance of Judah as a province on the border of Egypt, where the Persians lost their domination at this time. After the Persian period, the entire system falls out of use in the 2nd century BCE during the Hasmonean era. Even so, the foregoing six hundred years display elements of administrative continuity despite shifting patterns of foreign domination.

Introduction: 600 years of Stamping Jar Handles in Judah

For around 600 years, beginning in the last third of the 8th century and continuing to the end of the 2nd century BCE, Judeans routinely stamped the handles of storage jars with official seals of varying types. These stamped jars, containing liquid commodities, were collected at central Judean sites within an evolving but surprisingly durable administrative apparatus. Current evidence suggests that the process began at the same time Judah became an Assyrian client kingdom (Lipschits, Sergi & Koch 2010; 2011) and continued until the Hasmonean period (Bocher & Lipschits 2011; 2013). During the first 140 or so years, Judah was a client kingdom of As-

syria, perhaps Egypt, and then Babylon; while in the subsequent 450 years it was a province of the Babylonian, Persian, Ptolemaic and then Seleucid governments.

The earliest administrative system making use of stamped jars appears with the early types of *lmlk* stamp impressions, which date to the end of the 8th century BCE. The latest types of *lmlk* stamp impressions date to the early 7th century, followed by handles bearing incised concentric circles from the mid-7th century and by rosette stamp impressions dating to the end of the 7th and the early 6th century BCE.¹ The many different varieties of seals and incision patterns in use within the Judean kingdom of the Iron Age II were evidently part of a long-lived administrative framework for controlling the collection of agricultural commodities. The varying historical vicissitudes of the Judean kingdom evidently did not affect the basic logic and functions of the system for about 140 years. This is indicated by continuity in the manufacturing of a fairly uniform range of storage jar types,² and the use of numerous seal types bearing royal emblems for stamping handles (Lipschits, Sergi & Koch 2010: 7-10). Whatever administrative logic and economic functions informed this system of marking jars and collecting commodities, it persisted for an additional 450 years, during the Babylonian period (the *mwšh* and lion stamped handles; see Zorn, Yellin & Hayes 1994; Lipschits 2010; Lipschits & Ornan [in preparation]), during the Persian and the Early Hellenistic periods (the early and middle types of the *yhwd* stamped handle system; see Vanderhooft & Lipschits 2007; Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2011) and until the late Hellenistic period (the late *yhwd* and the *yršlm* stamp impressions; see Lipschits & Vanderhooft, *ibid.*; Bocher & Lipschits 2011; 2013).

Changes did occur within the system especially in terms of paleography, but also in the form and content of the Judahite seals over this long period of time. In its early phase, the *lmlk* stamp impressions routinely combined figurative and graphic elements. The script was, of course, Hebrew. By the 7th century BCE, figurative elements became more prominent

¹ See: Lipschits, Sergi & Koch 2010; 2011; Lipschits 2012; Koch & Lipschits 2010; 2013. The first suggestion to see the development of the stamped jar handles as part of a long process, begun at the end of the 8th century BCE and continuing until the destruction of Jerusalem was made by Ji 2001. The division between “before Sennacherib” and “after-Sennacherib” *lmlk* stamp impressions had already been suggested by Grena (2004: 337), based on 13 *lmlk* jar handles from 7th century “Babylonian Attack” strata in Jerusalem, Arad, Lachish, Timna and Ḥorvat Shilḥa.

² See already Vaughn 1999: 148-150; Shai & Maeir 2003; Gitin 2006, and the recent study of Sergi et al. 2012, with further literature.

on seals used in the jar system, although purely epigraphic seals and bullae remained prevalent in other administrative, economic and legal contexts. Sometime in the mid-6th century BCE, the lion became the dominant figural element used on official seals, alongside those bearing only inscriptions.³ In the early Persian period, figurative elements disappeared altogether, and the seals began to include script only (Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2011: 758-759). For nearly two centuries in the early Persian period, the script was Aramaic. Only in the late 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, as the Paleo-Hebrew script re-emerged, did some Hebrew letter forms appear engraved on the seals (Vanderhooft 2011: 529-544). Near the end of the system, seals bearing the legend *ṭ-yhd* in a circle include only Paleo-Hebrew letters (Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2011: 657-755). The final change came as the system began to fade into desuetude, in the second half of the 2nd century BCE, with the appearance of the Paleo-Hebrew *yršlm* stamp impressions. After more than three centuries of purely epigraphic administrative seals, these stamp impressions evince a substantial reconfiguration of design: the figurative element reappears with the inclusion of a pentagram in the centre of the seal. In addition, each of the letters of the toponym *yršlm* (which never appeared before) was etched in Paleo-Hebrew between the vertexes of the pentagram. These stamp impressions are the last link in the long chain of administrative jar stamps, after which the process and system went into disuse (Bocher & Lipschits 2011; 2013).

1. Changes and Continuity in the System of Stamped Jar Handles in the 6th Century BCE

The rosette jar handles are the last in the Iron Age system of stamped jars. Nearly all the handles of this type (220 out of 230, about 95%), which are well dated stratigraphically to the end of the 7th and the early 6th century BCE, were found within the boundaries of the Kingdom of Judah (Koch & Lipschits 2010; 2013).⁴ The large number of seals belonging to the rosette

³ It is not clear that the 42 known *mwh* stamped handles (30 of them were excavated in Tell en-Naşbeh, see Zorn, Yellin & Hayes 1994: 166), were part of the persistent administrative system; they may represent a distinctive regional system, perhaps part of a private or official estate (Lipschits 2005: 149-152).

⁴ From the total number of 230 stamped handles, 81 were discovered at Jerusalem and its vicinity, 43 at Ramat Raḥel (and five more in sites in the nearby Rephaim Valley), 47 stamped handles were discovered at lowland sites (about half of them at Lachish), 15 came from the Benjamin Plateau, 11 exemplars were excavated in En-Gedi (the only

type, made up of four main groups and divided into 24 sub-types (Koch 2008), testify to its complexity and, probably, its relatively long life-span. Even if the total number of rosette jar handles is smaller than the number of late *lmlk* handle types from the early 7th century BCE (380), and also slightly smaller than the number of handles incised with concentric circles from the middle of the 7th century (270), we may hypothesize that each of these three types was in use during a similar time-span of at least several decades. The rosette type thus attests to administrative continuity within the system of marking and collecting commodities within the Kingdom of Judah. This is reinforced by the fact that all the *lmlk*, concentric circle, and (with a few exceptions) rosette jars were produced in the same workshop in the eastern Judean Lowlands probably the region of the Elah Valley (see Yellin & Cahill 2004). Furthermore, the seals were stamped on handles in a similar way, while the type of jar used with all three seal styles evolved gradually and organically throughout the 7th century BCE (Gitin 2006: 517; Sergi et al. 2012).

eastern site to produce rosette stamped handles, except for the nearby small site of Vered Jericho), 11 came from the Beersheba-Arad Valley, while six stamped handles were discovered in two sites in the Judean Hill country (5 in Beth-Zur and one in Nebi-Daniel). No rosette handles were found at Hebron or in its vicinity, and just a few were found outside the boundaries of the Kingdom of Judah (two in Gezer and one each in Tell es-Safi and Beth-Shean, see: Koch & Lipschits 2010; 2013).

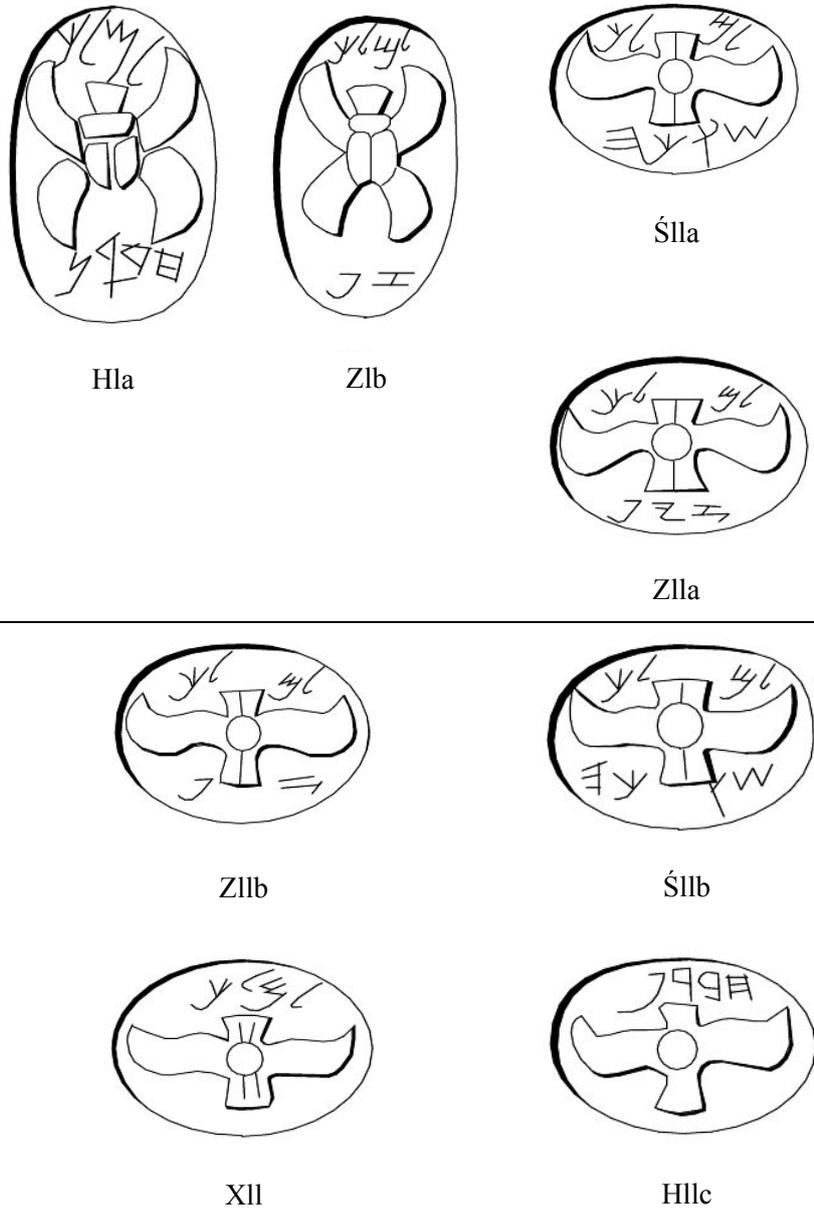


Fig. 1: Some of the lmlk stamp impressions 8th century BCE (top) and 7th century BCE (bottom)

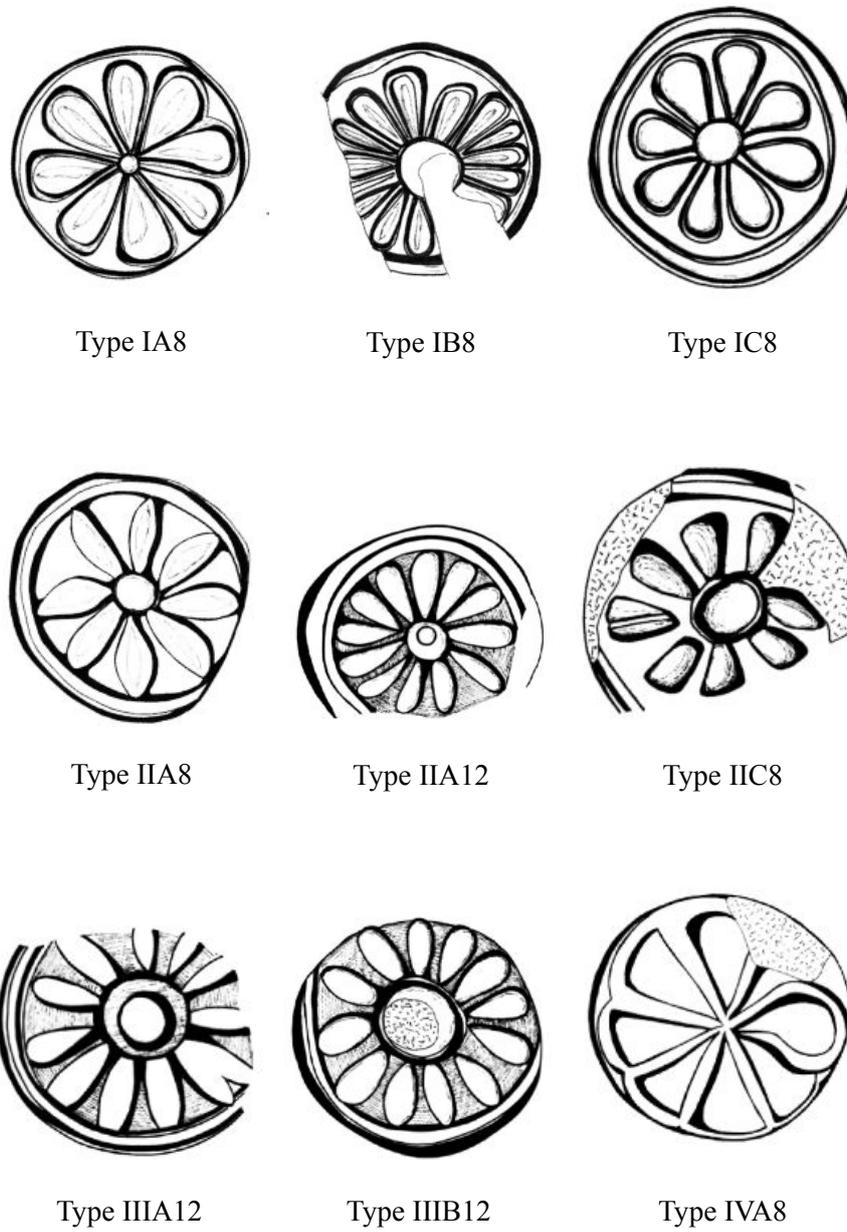


Fig. 2: Main rosette types

The lion stamp impressions on the bodies or the handles of jars appear to continue after the rosette system. The lion stamps are continuous with the late Iron Age rosette jars inasmuch as these two types alone make use of one dominant figurative symbol, but the lion handles do not appear in late Iron Age stratigraphic levels; they post-date the kingdom. In both cases, rosette and lion stamp impressions, Ramat Raḥel was an important collection centre; indeed, after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ramat Raḥel became the dominant site. 70 lion stamped jar handles were excavated at Ramat Raḥel, out of a total of about 127 exemplars known to date.⁵

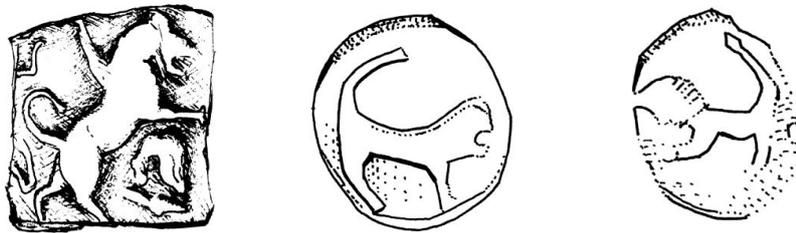


Fig. 3: Main lion types

Stern (1982: 209-210; 2001: 541) was the first to recognize the *terminus ad quem* of these stamped handles, which are absent from later, “classic” Persian period strata. However, based on his historical reconstruction, he argued that these stamped handles could not date to the pre-Persian period (i.e., to the “Exilic period”). Several subtypes of the lion stamp seals include an uncertain “object” (Aharoni 1964: 45) or “indistinct sign” (Pritchard 1961: opposite of Fig. 46) as part of the seal tableau, the totality of which depicts a lion rearing up on its hind legs with forelegs outstretched. Stern interpreted this “object” near the lion as an Achaemenid “fire altar” and thus preferred to date the entire range of lion stamp impressions to the very beginning of the Persian period.⁶

⁵ From a total number of 127 stamped handles, and beside the 70 that were discovered at Ramat Raḥel (56%), 29 handles were discovered at Jerusalem 22.5%, all of them in the City of David), 12 at Nebi Samwil, 5 at Tell en-Naşbeh, 4 at En-Gedi, 3 at Rogem Gan-nim, 2 at Gibeon, and one each at Jericho and Shechem. A modified typological classification demonstrates that two out of 10 types were found solely at Ramat Raḥel, one additional type was found at Ramat Raḥel and Nebi Samwil only, and that all the other types are represented mainly at Ramat Raḥel.

⁶ Compare Ariel & Shoham 2000: 141, but see Williamson 1988: 60-64.

New finds and new studies suggest a slightly earlier date for the lion stamp impressions, probably in the period when Judah was under Babylonian auspices (between the demise of the kingdom and the beginning of the Achaemenid era), and thus continuing the late Iron Age rosette stamp impressions and preceding the Persian era *yhwd* stamp system.

A new study of the iconography of 6th century lion stamps on bricks from Babylon shows that many of them also include a clearer variation of the “unidentified object” in the Judean exemplars; this study shows that the scene originates in the Assyrian-Babylonian world, and that the peculiar “object” is a human head in profile (Sass & Marzahn 2010: 180-182; 247). With respect to the date of the Judean examples, two lion stamp impressions were recovered near a 6th century BCE ‘private’ stamp impression in excavations at Ramat Raḥel; the two impressions were on the bodies of jars that appear to continue the typical rosette jar type and to precede the well-known *yhwd* jars from the Persian period.

Furthermore, petrographic analysis of the lion stamped handles shows a closer resemblance to the Iron Age rosette jar handles than to the Persian-period *yhwd* jars (Gross & Goren 2010). Analyses of a large number of jars bearing *lmlk* stamp impressions on their handles (from all types) reveal that they were all made from the same clay bed in a circumscribed area somewhere in the Shephelah.⁷ This was probably the Elah Valley, and, if so, the site of Socoh would then be a strong candidate as the production centre for the jars (Goren & Halperin 2004; Goren, Finkelstein & Na’aman 2004: 284-285). Preliminary petrographic analysis of the *yhwd* stamped jars demonstrates, by contrast, that during the Persian and Hellenistic periods the jars were made from clay of the Moza formation in the Jerusalem vicinity (Lipschits & Vanderhoof 2011: 59-61). If the *lmlk* jars are characterised by a clear origin in the Shephelah and the *yhwd* jars derive from the Jerusalem region, then the provenance of the Rosette jars suggest the beginnings of a shift in the location of the production of the jars at the end of the 7th and the early 6th century BCE. While the majority of the jars come from the same location as the earlier *lmlk* storage-jars, at least eight Rosette jars were made of Moza formation clay, which suggests that a production centre was established for the first time in the Jerusalem vicinity (Yellin & Cahill 2003; 2004). Petrographic analysis of the lion stamped handles shows an intensification of this trend: while some of the jars were still produced in the Shephelah of Judah, a majority of them were produced in the area of Jerusalem.

⁷ See: Millett, Pritchard & Ralph 1964; Mommsen, Perlman & Yellin 1984; Gunneweg, Perlman & Meshel 1985: 272-278.

Petrography thus suggests that, irrespective of their point of origin, the jars of the several types and periods were used within a durable administrative framework designed for marking, collecting, and perhaps distributing commodities. The shift of the production centre from the Shephelah to the Jerusalem area clarifies the history of Judah, its economy, and administration. In particular, the Rosette and Lion jars indicate a gradual shift away from production in the Shephelah towards the vicinity of Jerusalem. This may signal the retrenchment of royal authority eastward towards the region of the capital following Neo-Assyrian depredations in the Shephelah and subsequent contested or tenuous Judean exertion of control in the lowlands. By the early 6th century BCE, the effective westward reach of the Judean crown becomes increasingly limited as the contested lowlands were caught in conflict between competing local (Judean and Philistine) and super-regional forces (Egyptian and Babylonian). The preponderance of Lion stamped jars from the Jerusalem region suggests that this process had accelerated and reinforces the placement of this type in the 6th century BCE, perhaps in the Babylonian period. Evidently, Judeans continued to mark and collect jars as they had long done, even if the jars were no longer mainly produced in the lowlands.⁸

2. The System of yhw'd Stamped Jars – The Main Facts and Developments during the Persian and Hellenistic Periods

The publication of a full catalogue of all the published and unpublished *yhw'd* stamp impressions, together with complete archaeological data for each stamp impression, a revised typology and chronological proposals for each type, provides a basis for studying the entire system (Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2011). It also informs analysis of the function and role that these stamps had in the provincial administration and economy.

The *yhw'd* stamp impressions from the Persian and Early Hellenistic period are well sorted into seventeen main types assigned to three main chronological periods: early (late 6th through 5th centuries BCE); middle (4th and 3rd centuries BCE); and late (2nd century BCE). 128 stamp impressions may be assigned to the early types, 312 to the middle types, and 142 to the late types.

⁸ The prominence of the Lion stamp impressions at Ramat Raḥel is another indication that the site continued to have a prominent administrative role during the 6th century BCE, when its second building phase continued to exist; see: Lipschits et al. 2011; forthcoming.



Type 1



Type 2



Type 3a



Type 3b



Type 4



Type 5



Type 6a



Type 6b



Type 7



Type 8



Type 9



Type 10



Type 11



Type 12

Fig. 4.1: yhw'd early types



Type 13a



Type 13b



Type 13c



Type 13f



Type 14a



Type 14b



Type 15



Type 16



Type 17

Fig. 4.2: yhd middle types (top) and late types (bottom)

Ramat Raḥel produced the largest number of stamp impressions from these periods, about 53% of the total number (307 stamped handles).⁹ It is important to notice, however, that 71% of the early *yhwd* types came from this site, very similar to the 70% of the total number of the Lion stamp impressions. In this respect, the continuity between the two systems from the 6th to the 5th centuries seems well established. 60% of the total number of the middle types were discovered at Ramat Raḥel, but only 22% of the late types. The meaning of these numbers is clear for any understanding of the status of Ramat Raḥel during the Babylonian and Persian periods: a major change occurred in the Hellenistic period (see below).

Jerusalem was not the main administrative centre represented in the corpus of the *yhwd* stamp impressions, especially among the early and middle types. The various excavated areas throughout the city produced 163 *yhwd* stamp impressions, about 28% of the total corpus. Only 17 stamp impressions from Jerusalem belong to the early types, dated to the late 6th and 5th centuries BCE, all of which were discovered in the City of David and none in other excavated parts of Jerusalem. This represents only 13% of the total number of the early types, most of them (9) from one type and only one or two from 6 other types. The 59 stamp impressions belonging to the middle types, dated to the 4th-3rd centuries BCE, were also discovered only in the City of David. This number represents 19% of the total number, most of them (40) from one type. 87 stamp impressions belonging to the late types, dated to the 2nd century BCE, were discovered in Jerusalem, 27 of them appear for the first time in the Western Hill of Jerusalem and its surroundings. The number of stamp impressions discovered at the City of David and the Western Hill represent 61% of 142 total stamp impressions, and together with the large number of *yršlm* stamp impressions discovered in all parts of the city, this number represents the renewed administrative status of Jerusalem in the 2nd century BCE, especially under Hasmonean rule.

Ramat Raḥel and Jerusalem together produced 81% of the total number of *yhwd* stamped handles. 13 more *yhwd* stamped handles have no provenance. This means that only 17% (99) of all stamp impressions derive from other sites. In most sites where excavators recovered a significant number of stamp impressions, they belong to the early and middle types, not the late types. This fact coincides with the changes that occurred in Judah in the early Hellenistic period and especially in the 2nd century BCE.

⁹ This number does not include the finds from the last season of excavations, July-August 2010.

3. Changes and Continuity in the System of Stamped Jar Handles in the Early Persian Period

In comparison with the middle decades of the sixth century (i.e., after the collapse of the Judean kingdom), there are only minor changes in Judean material culture at the end of the sixth century BCE, and from the archaeological point of view, the beginning of the so-called “Post Exilic Period” cannot be isolated as a distinctive horizon within the larger Persian period. Whatever demographic changes may have occurred in Judah after 539 BCE do not register in the archaeological record: settlement patterns do not suddenly alter or reflect anything like a “return”; the administrative and economic landscapes do not suddenly burgeon; and pottery and other material cultural elements continue their mid-sixth century trajectories (Lipschits 2011a; 2011b). There are only small and gradual changes in most aspects of the material culture that slowly brought new shapes and characteristics, which would coalesce in the “classic” Persian-period features that characterised the second half of the 5th and the early 4th centuries BCE (Lipschits 2011a: 194-196).

One of the few clear changes that can be detected in the Early Persian period, even though its exact date cannot be archaeologically decided and is a matter of historical reconstruction, is the emergence of new types of stamped jar handles, the early *yhw*d stamp impressions, which witness a change in script, sudden use of the toponym *yhw*d, and the disappearance of glyptic elements. These changes, evidently postdating the use of the Lion stamps, are important, yet even here we perceive administrative continuity between the two systems: 71% of the early *yhw*d types were discovered at Ramat Raḥel, while 70% of the Lion stamp impressions came from that site. Even when the seals changed in many important respects, the early *yhw*d stamps seem to have functioned in ways similar to the foregoing period: a dominant collection centre predominated (Ramat Raḥel); a relatively small number of jars were sent to the City of David (13% of the finds); and scattered examples appeared at other places in Judah, generally quite close to Jerusalem.¹⁰

¹⁰ 21 *yhw*d stamped handles were discovered at 12 other sites: 3 at each of Nebi Samwil and En-Gedi; 2 each at Tell en-Naşbeh, Jericho, Gezer, Rogem Gannim, and Tel Ḥarāsim; and one at 4 other sites. The origin of one stamp impression is unknown.

The continued use of seals to mark commodities for collection and the centrality of Ramat Raḥel within the system should not disguise the significant changes that occur: the change in glyptic tradition and avoidance of iconography is dramatic (Ornan 2010; Lipschits & Ornan in preparation), as is the introduction of Aramaic script to the exclusion of Hebrew (Vanderhooff 2011). These changes should no doubt be linked to the emergence of a new imperial authority, the Persians, and to new administrative practices previously uncommon in Judah, such as the administrative use of Aramaic script. All the seals used to produce the early types of *yehud* stamp impressions, dated to the end of the 6th and to the 5th century BCE, were engraved in lapidary Aramaic. It is less clear, however, whether such new features can be associated with imperial mandates (in the case of the script) or the habits of an emergent new elite in Judah, some of whom may have originated in the Babylonian diaspora.

Debate has long existed about the relative date of the seals within the Aramaic lapidary sequence. Naveh (1970) and Avigad (1976) concluded, as had Garbini (1962) and Cross (1969), before them, that the Aramaic seals belonged to the Persian period and the Paleo-Hebrew seals to the Hellenistic (third-second centuries BCE). Although previous scholars assumed that these two categories may have overlapped – and it is likely that the lapidary Aramaic and early Jewish scripts did overlap (see Magen, Misgav & Tsafania 2004: 30-41) – our analysis shows that the purely Paleo-Hebrew seals were produced substantially later than those that used Aramaic.

When the lapidary Aramaic script first appeared in the *yehud* stamp impressions – and also in the *mwsḥ* stamp impressions of the sixth century (Zorn, Yellin & Hayes 1994) – this was a clear innovation compared with the exclusive use of the Hebrew script on seals of the late Judean kingdom. The shift of script and language was evidently a relatively sudden change (Avigad 1976; for Transjordan see Lemaire 1994). This would not have happened before the collapse of the Judean kingdom, but must have occurred during either the Babylonian, or, more likely, early Achaemenid domination in the region.¹¹

¹¹ Several groups of Hebrew epigraphs may indicate that Hebrew persisted for a time after the collapse of the kingdom and before Aramaic became dominant. These include the Gibeon jar handles (Cross 1962) and the Ketef Hinnom silver amulets (Barkay et al. 2004).

Paleographic analysis shows that a formal version of the Aramaic script was introduced into Judah during the mid-sixth century. Numerous conservative, if not archaic, forms appear in the script of the earliest *yehud* stamp impressions (especially types 1-6 according to Vanderhooft & Lipschits 2007; Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2011: 62-73). Some letters in these stamps only appear in conservative lapidary forms that were normal for the seventh and sixth centuries, not later, including, e.g., *aleph*, *mem*, and *reš*. Other letters are known in their conservative seventh-sixth century forms in one *yehud* stamp impression type, but appear in more developed, “classic” forms of the Persian period lapidary in others: e.g., *dalet*, *waw*, and *yod*. During the fifth century, however, the “classic” forms replace the more archaic ones and become completely dominant. Thus, the script that appears in the earliest seals must have been adopted before the 5th century (Vanderhooft 2011; Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2011: 65).

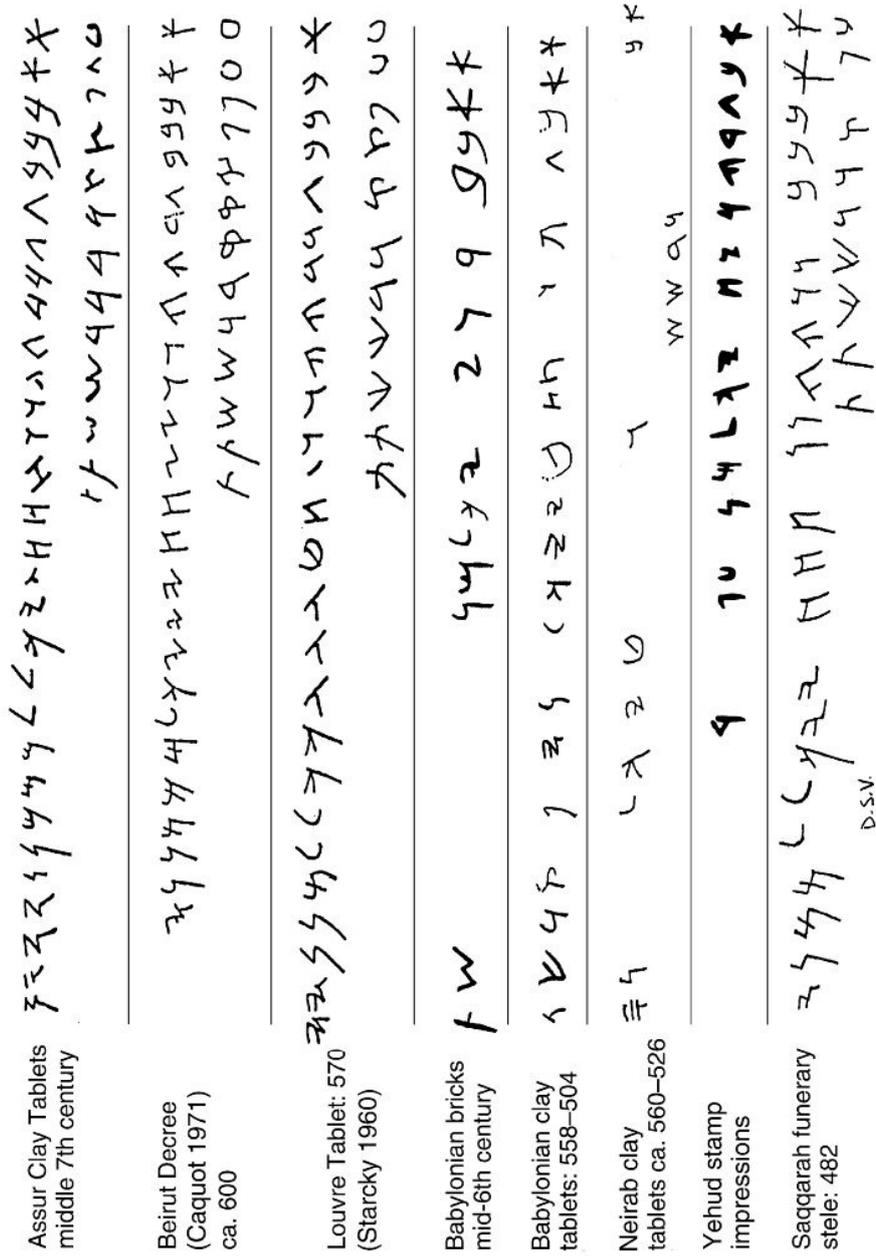


Fig. 5: Lapidary Aramaic scripts

4. *Changes and Continuity in the System of Stamped Jar Handles in the Late Persian Period*

Of all the major sites beyond the City of David and Ramat Raḥel that yielded *yhwd* stamp impressions in Judah – Tell en-Naṣbeh, Nebi Samwil, Jericho, and En-Gedi – only a few belong to the early types, while the vast majority belong to the middle types (probably beginning in the early 4th century BCE). At all these sites, without exception, no stamped handles from the late types (2nd century BCE) were discovered.¹²

The main change in the appearance and distribution of *yhwd* stamped jars occurred sometime around the end of the 5th or even the early 4th century BCE, when the seals used in the system appeared with a more uniform style, paleography and orthography. Three main types of stamps occur beginning with the middle types (types 13-15 Vanderhooft & Lipschits 2007; Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2011). They read simply *yhd* or *yh*, an abbreviated writing of the toponym, but without any accompanying personal names, which were characteristic of early types. In addition, some seals now have rectangular or square shapes, while earlier exemplars were uniformly circular or oval (Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2007: 81; 2011: 253-56). The letter *he* in these seals occasionally has a Paleo-Hebrew form, perhaps in imitation of 4th century *yehud* coins, which may have provided a model for the seals of this group.

The changes in the characteristics of the *yhwd* stamp impressions of the middle types, which show a high degree of uniformity, were perhaps the result of the growing importance of the southern Levant for the Persian Empire, when it lost its control over Egypt (Lipschits & Vanderhooft 2007). The more consistent stamping practices in Yehûd is apparently one of numerous other changes that occurred in the southern Levant after the Achaemenid loss

¹² From the 19 *yhwd* stamped handles discovered at Tell en-Naṣbeh, only one belongs to the early types, 18 to the middle types, and no late *yhwd* stamp impressions come from the site. From 16 *yhwd* stamped handles discovered at Nebi Samwil, only three belong to the early types, 13 to the middle types, and no late types come from this site. From the 18 *yhwd* stamped handles excavated in Jericho, only two stamp impressions belong to the early types, 16 belong to the middle types, and Jericho has yielded no late types. From the 10 *yhwd* stamped handles found at En-Gedi, 3 stamp impressions belong to the early types, 7 to the middle types, and no late types have been found at this site. Also at Rogem Gannim, one of the major small production centres in the Rephaim valley, in the vicinity of Ramat Raḥel, where 7 *yhwd* stamped handles were excavated, two belong to the early types, 5 to the middle types, and no late types have appeared. A slightly different distribution may be noticed in Gezer, far away from the borders of Judah, where 8 *yhwd* stamped handles were discovered. Two of these belong to the early types, one to the middle types, and 5 to the late types.

of control in Egypt. Achaemenid authority over populations in the border region was probably tightened, as indicated by the Aramaic ostraca from the southern Shephelah, as well as the date of the establishment of the palace at Lachish (Fantalkin & Tal 2007) and probably some other forts in the Judean hills, the Shephelah, and the Negev area. The need for agricultural products such as grain, wine and oil, became important for the Persian army during this period, probably because of the presence of military contingents and, perhaps, local administrators, necessary elements of the numerous expeditions to Egypt or to defend against Egyptian and allied assaults.

The changes that occurred in the system of *yhwd* stamp impressions of the middle period, might then be a result of a tighter Persian control in the administration of the collection and distribution system which the stamps reflect, when the name of the province, or its abbreviated form, became the only necessary piece of information in the stamps. The names of local administrators were no longer relevant for the system, and only the source of the product – the name of the province – was significant. As part of this change some other secondary administrative centres assume a more important role in the system, and in addition to the 186 stamped handles discovered at Ramat Raḥel and the 59 from the City of David, 67 more stamp impressions were discovered at 9 sites: 18 at Tell en-Naṣbeh; 16 at Jericho; 13 at Nebi Samwil; 7 at En-Gedi; and 5 at Rogem Gannim.¹³

The system represented by the middle types of the *yhwd* stamp impressions was quite durable and evidently persisted through the Ptolemaic era into the Seleucid period. It then seems to have undergone additional modification during the Hasmonean period. Even then, however, continuity with the middle types is discernible, since only the name of the province appears in the late stamps, either abbreviated in the *-yh* symbol, or in Paleo-Hebrew with the *tet*-symbol. On the other hand, secondary administrative centres that were represented in the system of the middle types yield no stamped jars during the time when the late types were in use. In addition to the 31 stamped handles from Ramat Raḥel and 87 from Jerusalem (including the City of David, the Western Hill and immediate vicinity), only 16 more stamp impressions were discovered at 11 sites. Of these, 5 come from Gezer, 2 from Bethany, while nine sites produced one each. 8 other stamp impressions have no provenance. The system then comes to an end with the use of the pentagram stamps bearing the toponym *yršlm* (Bocher & Lipschits 2011; 2013).

¹³ One stamp impression was discovered at each of 4 other sites outside the borders of Judah (Gezer, Khirbet Nisya, Kadesh-Barnea and Tell Jemmeh), while the origin of 4 other stamped handles is unknown.



Type A



Type B



Types C-C1



Types D-D1



Type E



Type F

Fig. 6: Main yršlm types

Conclusions

The stamped jar handles have become both a renewed source for historical reconstruction and an archaeological indicator for understanding continuity and change in the history, administration, archaeology, and paleography of Judah between the late 8th and the late 2nd centuries BCE. In this paper we highlighted trends of continuity in the stamped handle system from the time of the Judean kingdom to the Babylonian and then to the Persian period. This continuity in the agricultural and administrative system of producing and collecting agricultural products persisted across periods of historical, political and demographic changes, during which time the kingdom of Judah ceased to exist and turned from a Babylonian vassal kingdom into a Persian province for the next 200 years (539-333 BCE).

Around the end of the 6th century BCE, formal changes in the seals used to stamp jars occurred. Aramaic replaced Hebrew script and glyptic elements disappeared. Seals named particular administrators and Ramat Rahel became the dominant administrative node in the system, outstripping Jerusalem by a wide margin in terms of jars recovered. Moreover, the jars were produced in the Jerusalem region, not the lowlands as in the Iron Age. During the beginning of the 4th century BCE, the system underwent consolidation and only the name of the province or its abbreviation occurs on seals. The consolidation may derive from the importance of Judah as a province on the border of Egypt, where the Persians lost their domination at this time.

The entire system falls out of use in the 2nd century BCE during the Hasmonean era, when the toponym *yhw*d gives way in the last instance within the system to seals naming *yršlm* together with the pentagram symbol. Even so, the foregoing 600 years display a remarkable persistence of administrative habit in the face of a dizzying array of political contexts for Judean subservience.

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Zu diesem Band

Der vorliegende Band untersucht die materielle Kultur Israel/Palästinas der Perserzeit vor dem Hintergrund der Hypothese Ephraim Sterns, im Übergang von der (Neu-)Babylonischen zur Persischen Periode habe in Juda eine „religiöse Revolution“ stattgefunden, aus der ein bildloser Monotheismus hervorging. Der Band geht im Kern auf den Workshop „Jewish Material' Otherness? Ethnic, Religious and Cultural Boundaries in Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Times in the Southern Levant“ zurück, der 2010 im Rahmen des Käte Hamburger Kollegs der Ruhr-Universität Bochum abgehalten wurde.

Nach einem einführenden Überblick über die materielle Kultur von der späten Eisen- bis zur frühen hellenistischen Zeit (Lester L. Grabbe) werden unter Berücksichtigung neuer Funde und aktueller Forschungserkenntnisse die wichtigsten Fundgattungen in den Blick genommen: administrative Stempelsiegel (Oded Lipschits & David Vanderhooft), Figurinen (Izak Cornelius, Rüdiger Schmitt), Räucherkästchen (Christian Frevel & Katharina Pyschny), Münzen (Mary Joan Winn Leith, Patrick Wyssmann), Siegel und Bullen (Silvia Schroer & Florian Lippke) und griechische Keramik (Astrid Nunn). Besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt regionalen Entwicklungen, wobei Gemeinsamkeiten wie Unterschiede innerhalb der materiellen Kultur etwa zwischen Yehûd und Samaria oder zwischen Yehûd und anderen Nachbarprovinzen hervortreten. Im Ergebnis zeigt der Band Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten in der materiellen Kultur auf, in denen sich politische, ökonomische und historische Entwicklungen spiegeln. Die These einer „religiösen Revolution“ lässt sich damit nicht belegen. In der differenzierten Diskussion der These Sterns und der Zusammenschau der materiellen Kultur der Perserzeit leistet der Band einen wichtigen Beitrag zu einer Religionsgeschichte Israel/Palästinas der Perserzeit.

Summary

The present volume discusses the material culture of Persian Period Palestine/Israel against the background of Ephraim Stern's hypothesis that Judah witnessed a "religious revolution" during the transition between the (Neo)Babylonian and the Persian period, resulting in an imageless monotheism. The collection of essays originated in a workshop on "Jewish 'Material' Otherness? Ethnic, Religious and Cultural Boundaries in Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Times in the Southern Levant", held at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg *Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe* (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) in 2010. Following an introductory overview on the material culture of the late Iron Age to the early Hellenistic period (Lester L. Grabbe), the most relevant object genres are reviewed in the light of new finds and current research: administrative stamp-seals (Oded Lipschits & David Vanderhooft), figurines (Izak Cornelius, Rüdiger Schmitt), incense burners (Christian Frevel & Katharina Pyschny), coins (Mary Joan Winn Leith, Patrick Wyssmann), seals and bullae (Silvia Schroer & Florian Lippke) and Greek pottery (Astrid Nunn). Special attention is devoted to regional developments in order to highlight commonalities and differences in the material culture between Yehûd and Samaria, and between Yehûd and the other neighbouring provinces. The volume demonstrates continuities and discontinuities in material culture, which mirror political, economic and historical developments. If the "religious revolution" thesis cannot be substantiated, the volume makes an important contribution to the history of religion of Persian Period Palestine/Israel with its nuanced discussion of Stern's thesis and the new synopsis it offers of the material, and especially pictorial, culture of the period.