

A DOUBLE-STAMPED *ZIR* HANDLE FROM MISKA

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A stamped *zir* jar handle was unearthed in Area C, Stratum IV, L215 (see Spivak, this volume). Two stamps occur on the upper side of the handle (Fig. 1), one near the other. The stamps have the same diameter (19 mm) and are only 4 mm apart. One of the stamps depicts a six-pointed star with dots between the spikes and a dot at the center of the star; the star is surrounded by a thick bold circle. The second stamp comprises two concentric circles with a dot in the center.

An example of a double stamped *zir* handle was also found in an Islamic-period context at Caesarea (Fig. 2; Cat. No. 99-1995).¹ One of the stamps on this handle—the one closer to the body of the jar—is identical to the six-pointed star stamp from Miska. The second stamp exhibits a more complex design, with eight loops surrounding a square. The only other known example of a double-stamped handle was retrieved from Ramat Rahel during



Fig. 1. A double-stamped handle from Miska.

¹ The handle from Caesarea was examined by the author with the permission of Joseph Patrich.



Fig. 2. A double-stamped handle from Caesarea.

Aharoni's excavations (Taxel and Amitai-Preiss 2016:557, Fig. 36:2, 3). This handle exhibits one stamp with a design and another with a legend. The stamp with the legend is shallower than the other stamp, indicating that it was subjected to greater wear and may have been impressed into the handle at an earlier time.

An almost complete jar was discovered in an Early Islamic context at Ramla (South; Amitai-Preiss, personal observation), providing further evidence of stamps occurring on both handles of a single jar. In this example, each handle was stamped once, and a similar stamp appears on both handles. These stamps are also of the same star type as the one on the Miska handle; in this case, depicting an octagonal star with dots between its spikes and an additional dot in its center (Tal and Taxel 2008:147, Fig. 6.94:31). Until a complete jar with a double-stamped handle is uncovered, it remains uncertain as to whether both handles of such a jar would have been stamped, and if so, would it have happened concurrently. Similarly, at present, it is unknown whether the other handle of such a jar would have had a single or a double stamp, or no stamp at all.

Stamped jar handles displaying various star designs were unearthed in the Umayyad-period pottery kilns of Nebi Samwil, a site located north of Jerusalem. These include dozens of vessels bearing seal impressions of five- and eight-pointed stars (*CIAP* III:132); a stamp identical to the one from Miska, with a six-pointed star and dots, was described by Adawi (2010:72, Fig. 4.9:2). An eight-pointed star was also found on a stamped handle unearthed at Jaffa (Amitai-Preiss, forthcoming). Early Islamic parallels for the design of the second stamp on the Miska handle, with two concentric circles, were found at Nebi Samwil (Adawi 2010:72, Fig. 4.9:6), and on a single stamped handle from Caesarea Maritima (Arnon 2008:165, Cat. No. 921).

A possible explanation for the double-stamped handles is that they represented a change in the ownership of the jar or in the warehouse in which the vessel was stored. However, in the case of Miska, a likely possibility is that both stamps were impressed at the same time and place—at the kilns of Nebi Samwil, where parallels are known for the designs of both of these stamps.

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