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The Glass Vessels from 'En Tamar

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The glass finds from the salvage excavation at 'En Tamar (see Erickson-Gini, this volume) were discovered in relatively poor condition, some covered with black weathering.[1] They comprise fragments of bowls, beakers and bottles (Fig. 1; Table 1), representing the two phases detected at the site. All can be dated to the second–third centuries CE, except for the bottle illustrated in Fig. 1:3, which dates to the eighth–ninth centuries CE.

Vessel with Facetted Decoration (Fig. 1:1).—This body fragment is decorated with thin, elongated facets, twelve of which are partially preserved in two rows. Vessels with a facetted decoration, made by abrading the surface with a wheel, were produced in various regions of the Roman Empire (Whitehouse 1997:222–223, 257–259; Israeli 2003:297–298). This pattern, comprising horizontal rows of thin, elongated facets, adorned various types of vessels, for example, a juglet of the third century CE (Israeli 2003:299, No. 400), a globular bottle assigned to the third–fourth centuries CE (von Saldern et al. 1974:185–186, No. 514), and a globular bowl, a footed bowl and a beaker, all dated to the third–fourth centuries CE (Whitehouse 1997:257–259, 374, Cat. Nos. 440–442, and see discussion and additional examples therein). Bowl fragments with a similar decoration, uncovered in excavations at Dura-Europos, are significant for the dating of this facet design; they were assigned to the Middle Imperial period, i.e., the second century

Table 1. The Glass Finds by Loci

Locus	Basket	Vessel Description	Color	Dimensions (mm)	Condition	Fig. No.
10	10	Bowl or beaker with a rounded rim	Colorless		Gold-colored iridescence	
18	20	Bottle with an infolded rim and a thick-walled, ridged neck with two ribs preserved	Light blue	Rim D 25	White and brown weathering	1:3
20	23	Tooled-out hollow ring base with a thick bottom	Not detectable	Base D 55	Black and gold-colored iridescence	1:2
22	25	Two fragments of a base with an applied trail	Not detectable		Black and brown weathering	
23	26	Body fragment adorned with facetted decoration	Colorless?		White/brown weathering	1:1
23	26	Neck fragment	Colorless?		White/brown weathering	
23	26	Tiny fragment of a rounded rim	Light blue			
27	35	Bowl or beaker with a rounded rim	Light bluish-green		White weathering	

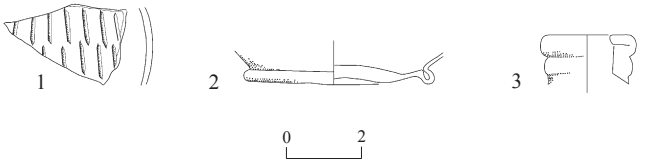

Fig. 1. Glass vessels.

until the fall of the city in 256 CE (Clairmont 1963:84, Pls. IX:337; XXXI:336, 337).

Two complete bowls, with a similar cut pattern of thin, elongated facets arranged in horizontal rows, were discovered in a Nabatean burial cave at ‘En Tamar, dated to the first–third centuries CE (Hirschfeld 2006:5–7, Fig. 28:1, 2). The bowls were dated by parallels to the second–third centuries CE. Small body fragments with circular facets were also discovered at nearby Meẓad Tamar (Erdmann 1977:142–143, Pl. 8:894, 895).

A bowl fragment with a similar abraded pattern was discovered at Ḥorbat ‘Uza, where the glass assemblage was dated to the late first–third centuries CE (Jackson-Tal 2007:279, Fig. 11.1:1, and see therein examples from Karanis in Egypt and Tigris in Turkey).

In Jordan, various facet-cut fragments were recorded at ‘Aqaba (Aila), in an early fourth-century CE structure (Jones 2005:136–137, Fig. 2:6, 7), and at Ez-Zantur III in Petra (Keller 2006: Pl. 13:a, c–g). Facetted fragments of various patterns were also documented at ‘Avedat,[2] in an assemblage predating the 363 CE earthquake, and in northern Sinai.[3]

The body fragment discussed here was discovered in a layer of ash over a floor in Sq 7 (L23), and its attribution to the second–third centuries CE contributes to the dating of this phase at ‘En Tamar.

Tooled-Out Hollow Ring Base (Fig. 1:2).— The modeling of the fold and the bottom of this base is characteristic of the second–third centuries CE. Similarly modeled bases were recovered from excavations at Naḥal Yattir and Ḥorbat Ẓalit, together with glass vessels dated mostly from the late first and mid-second centuries CE.[4]

Bottle with an Infolded Rim and Ridged Neck (Fig. 1:3).— This bottle fragment with an infolded rim and a thick, ridged neck belongs to a type of bottle characteristic particularly of the eighth–ninth centuries CE. A complete example was unearthed at Tel ‘Ira, together with three other bottles, all dated to the eighth–ninth centuries CE (Lehrer-Jacobson 1999:442–444, Fig. 13.1:3). A similar neck and shoulder fragment was recovered from the site of Upper Naḥal Besor, dated by the excavators to the seventh–early ninth centuries CE (Ben Michael, Israel and Nahlieli 2004: Fig. 12:4). At Caesarea, similar bottles occur in Stratum VII that dates from 750 CE to the late ninth century CE (Pollak 2003: Fig. 2:25, 26, 28), and thus corroborate the date for this bottle type.

The neck fragment discussed here should probably be associated with the eighth-century CE building in Area B of the site, and the structure and installation dated to the seventh–eighth centuries CE, excavated in 2001 to the east of the reported excavation (Seriy 2006).

NOTES

[1] I wish to thank the excavator, Tali Erickson-Gini, for the opportunity to study the material, and Yael Gorin-Rosen, for her assistance in processing the finds. The finds were drawn by Carmen Hersch.

[2] My thanks to Peter Fabian, who headed the IAA excavations at ‘Avedat, for his permission to cite these unpublished finds, and to Yael Gorin-Rosen, who studied the glass. Most of the glass finds come from contexts well-dated to the first half of the fourth century CE.

[3] The glass finds were studied by Yael Gorin-Rosen and the author. Thanks are due to Eliezer Oren of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, who headed the North Sinai Survey, for the opportunity to study the glass finds before their return to the Egyptian Authorities.

[4] My thanks to Peter Fabian for his permission to cite the unpublished finds from both IAA excavations, and to Yael Gorin-Rosen, who studied the glass.

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