

THREE MILITARY BREAD STAMPS FROM THE WESTERN WALL PLAZA EXCAVATIONS, JERUSALEM

LEAH DI SEGNI AND SHLOMIT WEKSLER-BDOLAH

Three bread stamps, two complete and one broken, were discovered in the Western Wall Plaza excavations in Jerusalem (Fig. 1). A *centuria* symbol, engraved at the beginning of the inscription on the two complete items, immediately identifies them as military bread stamps of the well-known type used by soldier-bakers of each specific unit. The third object lacks the end where the *centuria* symbol would have been engraved, but its shape and type of inscription leave no doubt as to its identification as a military bread stamp as well.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The salvage excavations in the northwestern part of the Western Wall Plaza cover an area of about 1500 sq m (35 × 50 m), 100 m away from the Temple Mount (Fig. 1). The excavated area occupies the northeastern slopes of the Western Hill of Jerusalem of the First Temple—the Upper City of the Second-Temple period (the area of the Jewish and Armenian Quarters today).¹

Five meters beneath the plaza's level, the monumental remains of a colonnaded street, identified with the Eastern Cardo of the Roman colony Aelia Capitolina, were revealed for a length of 50 m (Plan 1; Fig. 2; Weksler-Bdolah et al. 2007; Weksler-Bdolah 2009). The Cardo's total width is 24 m, including an 8 m wide carriageway in the center (L8108), lined by 1.5 m wide sidewalks, which are in turn flanked by porticoes (6.0–6.5 m wide). Both carriageway and sidewalks are paved with large flagstones (averaging more than 1 sq m): in the carriageway they are laid diagonally, whereas

in the sidewalks they are laid parallel to the direction of the street. A row of cells, which should perhaps be identified as shops, lines the western portico.

The Cardo runs parallel to the north-northwest–south-southeast direction of the Western Wall. Remains of two possible streets, almost 30 m apart, lead eastward from and are perpendicular to the Cardo (L8010, L4108; Plan 1). Prior to the construction of the Cardo, the landscape was reshaped to fit its direction and level. To do so, the bedrock of the Western Hill, which was higher than the desired level of the Cardo, was hewn away, creating a 10 m high vertical cliff

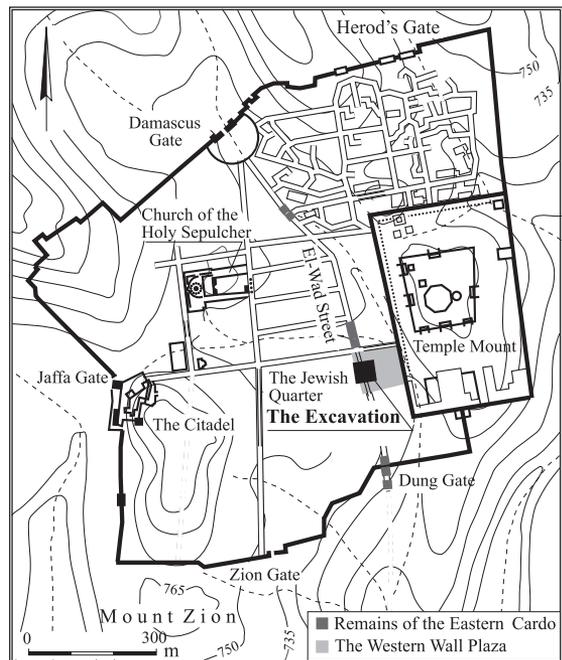


Fig. 1. Location map of the excavation site.

along the western side of the street. At the same time, two kinds of levelling work took place in the northern parts of the excavated area, where the bedrock descends sharply. Earlier structural remains that were higher than the planned level were cleared away, with only the parts under the

street level preserved, while low-lying areas, such as quarry sites, were intentionally filled.

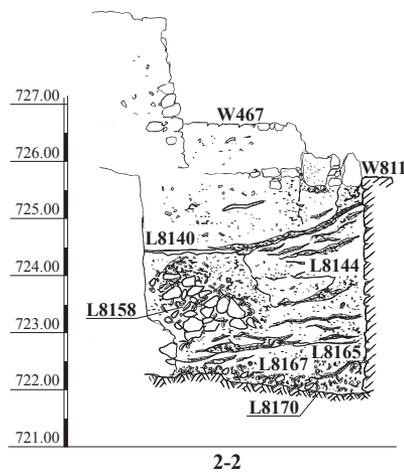
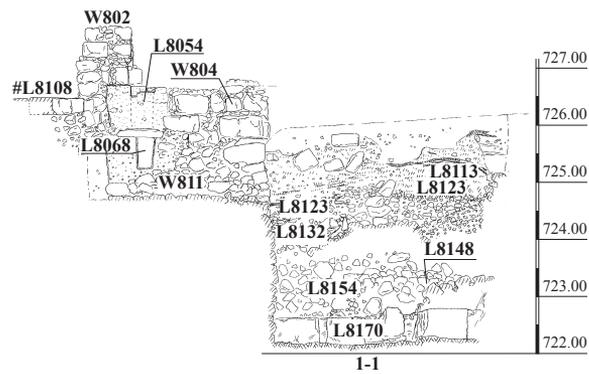
Sealed under the northern parts of the *Cardo's* flagstones were remains of a probable four-room house of the First Temple period (seventh century BCE; see Plan 1). Its walls, preserved



Plan 1. The Eastern *Cardo* in the Western Wall Plaza excavations: plan and sections (on opposite page).



Fig. 2. The Eastern Cardo in the Western Wall Plaza excavations, looking south.



to a height of 5 m, were founded on bedrock (Weksler-Bdolah et al. 2008; 2009; 2012; Ornan et al. 2009). Next to the Iron Age building, remains of quarries were unearthed (L8170).

Inside these quarries, a massive wall (W804; 2.5–3.5 m high, 2.9 m wide, 22 m long) was built atop the bedrock in a north–south direction (Plan 1).² The southern end of W804 abuts the vertical ‘zigzag’ face of the quarried bedrock to its south. From that point, W457 continues southward along the line of W804. Wall 457 (0.4 m high, 1.2 m wide) is narrower than W804, and is wholly carved in bedrock. It served as the eastern stylobate of the *Cardo*.

All three bread stamps were found within a deep deposit of soil, interspersed with ashes (L8133, L8123, L8144) that had accumulated above the quarried bedrock (L8170), and against the eastern face of W804. The deposit was sealed under the mosaic pavement of the *Cardo*’s eastern portico, as well as under the flagstones of the northern of the two streets that extend eastward from the *Cardo* (L8020). Together with the bread stamps was found a rich assemblage of small finds, including potsherds, glass vessels, faunal remains and coins. Due to its nature and texture this deposit was named the ‘Roman dump’.³

The bulk of the pottery from this accumulation of refuse can be attributed to the Roman military; many of the types are known from the kiln site of the Tenth Roman Legion at Binyane Ha-Umma (Arubas and Goldfus 2008:1829–1830; Magness 2005; Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2005). Imported lamps and fine tableware were also retrieved, as well as local vessels of some of the types that were abundant in Jerusalem in the late Second Temple period. Altogether, the assemblage contains a great variety of shapes, particularly a considerable quantity of mold-made fine tableware and terracotta fragments, the common subjects being Dionysiac imagery, grotesque faces and fragments of masks. In this context, the finds underline the presence of the legion: vessels for drinking and serving food reflect the dining habits of the officers, while masks

were traditionally hung by the soldiers on barrack verandas (Rosenthal-Heginbottom, in prep). Initial investigation of the assemblage from the dump points to a post-Second Temple period date—late first or early second century CE (Rosenthal-Heginbottom, in prep.).

The glass finds, which include various types previously unknown in Jerusalem or any other Judean site, also fall between 70 and 130 CE (Gorin-Rosen, in prep.). The coins are mostly of the Second Temple period, pre-70 CE, although the latest identified coin (L8144, B81249, IAA No. 33) dates to the reign of Domitian, 86/87 CE (Bijovsky, in prep.).⁴

To sum up, all the finds from the ‘Roman dump’ date to the late first–early second centuries CE and can safely be related to the Tenth Legion, which had its headquarters in Jerusalem from 70 CE to the second half of the third century CE (Isaac 1990:280). Stratigraphically, the construction of W804 and the accumulation of dirt and refuse against its sides, predate the paving of the *Cardo*. Chronologically, both phases, i.e., the preparation work (including the construction of W804 and the accumulation of the ‘Roman dump’) and the paving of the *Cardo*, date between 70 and 135 CE, and are probably Hadrianic (Weksler-Bdolah et al. 2012:47; Weksler-Bdolah and Onn, in prep.).

THE BREAD STAMPS

1. Stone Bread Stamp (L8113, B80498, 724.8 m asl; Fig. 3).

Dimensions: Base—length 8.5 cm, width 3.5 cm. Thickness 1.5–2.3 cm.

Description: Broken handle and back. Two lines of letters, 1 cm high, are deeply engraved in mirror script on its underside. The angular symbol at the beginning of the first line is 1.3 cm high. A dot separates the first and the second letter in the second line. Once impressed on the soft dough, the retrograde lettering would result in the following inscription:



Fig. 3. Bread Stamp 1 (B80498): (a) sealing surface; (b) stamp's mirror image; (c) back; (d) long side.

>AMATI (Centuria) Amati(i)
 C.ANTONI (Opus) C(aii) Antoni(i)
 (Century) of Amatius. (Work) of Caius Antonius.

Discussion: The stamp bears two names, both in the genitive. In the first line, the name preceded by the *centuria* symbol is that of the centurion in command of the unit for which the bread impressed with this stamp was baked. The second line contains the name of the soldier-baker. He is identified by his *praenomen*, C(aius), normally abbreviated, and his *nomen gentile*, Antonius.

Roman citizens in the Republican period were identified by two names, a *praenomen*, or personal name, of which no more than 16 were in use, and the name of the *gens*, or clan, to which they belonged. Toward the end of the Republican period a third element was added, the *cognomen* or family name. Of these *tria nomina* that distinguished the Roman citizen, the individual part was at first the *praenomen*, while the *nomen* was common to all the clan (and was the only name of women), and the *cognomen* was common to all the male members of the same family. Later, however, the *cognomen* became the individual part of the *tria nomina*, while the *praenomen* lost importance and was often omitted. Thus, the form of a Roman name in an inscription is a good indicator of its date, for the use of *praenomen* and *nomen* without *cognomen* came to an end before the end of the first century CE, while the omission of the *praenomen* became common in the late second century and especially in the third. In the bread stamp under discussion the use of *praenomen* and *nomen* alone point to a date not later than the end of the first century CE.

As there is no separating dot in the first line, the name of the centurion should read as Amati, “Of Amatus” or rather “Of Amatius”. The *Prosopographia Imperii Romani* (second edition, *PIR*²) knows of no such *nomen gentile*, but Amatius and Amatia are common enough in inscriptions, especially epitaphs, that represent

a humbler sector of the Roman population, the men and women who—unlike the members of the upper classes and their clients—were never mentioned in honorary inscriptions or in historical or literary works.⁵

2. Stone Bread Stamp (L8123, B81042, 724.65–724.19 asl; Fig. 4).

Dimensions: Base—length 5.8–6.0 cm, width 4.6–4.8 cm. Thickness 1.7 cm (3.5 cm including handle).

Description: This stamp, found in perfect condition, features a rectangular pierced handle. On the underside of the stamp, two lines of letters, 1.6 cm high, are deeply engraved in mirror script. The angular sign and the first letter at the beginning of the first line are 1.4 cm high, while the ligature of two letters at the end of the same line and the last letter of the second line reach a height of 1.8 cm. The letters have conspicuous serifs. Once impressed, the retrograde lettering results in the following inscription:

>CASPE (Centuria) Caspe(rii)
 CANIN (Opus) Canin(ii)
 (Century) of Casperius. (Work) of Caninius.

Discussion: As there are no separating dots, each line seemingly contains a single name, in both cases a *nomen gentile*. The *nomen gentile* Casperius was borne by several personages mentioned in literary sources (*PIR*² C 461–465, II [1935]:107). By curious coincidence, a centurion named Casperius (C 461) was active at a time very close to the period to which this and the other stamp can be assigned. In 51 CE this Casperius served with a *vexillatio* of Roman soldiers that garrisoned a fort in Armenia near Yerevan, and in 62 he was sent on a mission to Vologeses, king of Parthia (Tacitus, *Annales* XII, 45–46; XV, 5; cf. Isaac 1990:10–11, 52). At that time, Armenia was not a Roman province; therefore, it was not garrisoned by legions, and any Roman unit sent there must have belonged

to a legion stationed in a nearby province. Most likely, Casperius belonged to one of the legions stationed in Syria, three of which—the III Gallica, VI Ferrata and X Fretensis—took

part in the Parthian campaign in Armenia in 58–62 CE under Domitius Corbulo.⁶ The Tenth Legion, which in the mid-first century had its headquarters at Zeugma in northern Syria (Isaac 1990:38), may well have been Casperius' legion: in that case, if he was still serving at the outbreak of the Jewish Revolt, Casperius arrived in Palestine in late 66, and if he survived the war, he may have commanded a century during the siege of Jerusalem in 70.

The soldier-baker too appears to be identified by his *nomen* alone. The *gentilicium* Caninius was borne by several personages, most of them of the senatorial class (*PIR*² C 386–396, II [1935]:92–95), although of course the soldier Caninius, like Casperius, belonged to the humbler ranks of the Roman populace.

3. Stone Bread Stamp (L8144; B81076, 723.38–723.22 asl; Fig. 5).

Dimensions: Base—length 3.5 cm (broken), width 3.2 cm. Thickness 2.2–2.3 cm.

Description: The right-hand side of the inscribed face is missing, and the upper left corner is chipped. Judging by its proportions, about one third to a half of the stamp is lost. The upper face of the stamp is smooth and shows no trace of an attached handle, but each of the long sides has a groove, starting midway along its length and running parallel to the top and bottom surfaces, which may have gripped a handle. On the underside of the stamp, two lines of letters, 1.0–1.2 cm high, are deeply but carelessly engraved in mirror script, except for the letter N in the first line, which was incised in its regular form and becomes inverted in the impression. Once impressed, the retrograde lettering results in the following inscription:

-- PONI
-- VTO

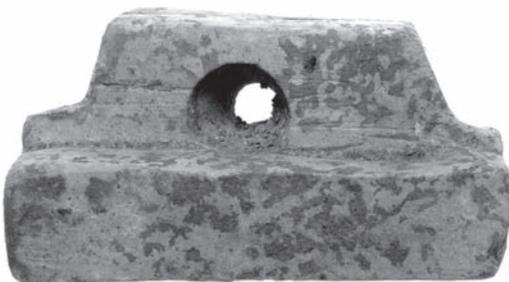
Discussion: The letter I at the end of the first line is almost entirely lost in the chipped corner of the stamp, but its base, with a notable serif,



a



b



c



Fig. 4. Bread Stamp 2 (B81042): (a) sealing surface; (b) stamp's mirror image; (c) long side.



Fig. 5. Bread Stamp 3 (B81076): (a) sealing surface; (b) stamp's mirror image; (c) back; (d, e) long sides with a groove, possibly for a handle; (f) profile (broken short side).

is visible. However, although the letters are clear, no certain restoration of the centurion's name can be suggested, for in the absence of a handle to show the mid-point of the stamp, it is impossible to say how many letters are missing at the beginning of the line. If we surmise that the proportion of width and height of the engraved surface was similar to Bread Stamp 1, the gap in the first line may contain as much as three letters, besides the symbol of *centuria*, in which case one might consider reading >Pom] poni, "Of Pomponius",⁷ or a shorter name after an abbreviated *praenomen*. Names ending in -ponius, preceded by one or two letters (e.g., Aponius or Coponius), are numerous, all of them *nomina gentilicia*.⁸ However, the proportions might be closer to those of Bread Stamp 2, or midway between the elongated type and the almost square type, in which case the first line would have space only for two

or three characters (e.g., >Aponi preceded by abbreviated *praenomen*, or >Coponi alone).

Restoring the second line is even more difficult. The letter O is clear, and although the background of the letter T is flaked, the letter is still legible. The last preserved letter is less certain, but a careful examination under varying directions of light shows that the left-hand stroke is not upright, but diagonal and slightly curved, so that the letter appears to be a V rather than an N. The ending -uto can be explained in one of two ways: The name of the soldier-baker appeared either in the nominative (which is quite acceptable: cf. Tepper and Di Segni 2006:29–30), or in a truncated form. The former is less likely, for only a small number of names end in -uto, all of which are non-Roman names that would hardly have been in use (as *cognomina*) in this period.⁹ If the name of the soldier was abbreviated, it may

have been S]uto(rius), or in the genitive S]uto(rii), a common *gentilicium*; if so, it was almost certainly accompanied by the initial of the *praenomen*, for at least two letters are lost in the break.¹⁰ If, however, the uncertain letter is an N, the name would surely be [A]nto(nii), also preceded by *praenomen*.¹¹ In all likelihood in this stamp, too, both names consisted of (possibly) *praenomen*, certainly *nomen*, but no *cognomen*, which is a clue to an early date.

CONCLUSION

It is interesting to compare the six names on these stamps with the names of centurions incised on the siphon of the High-Level Aqueduct to Jerusalem near Bethlehem (Di Segni 2002:41–47). Of the 23 names that appear there (some of them twice), only four

consist of a *nomen gentile* alone, eight of *nomen* and *cognomen*, ten of *cognomen* alone and one, exceptionally, of *praenomen* and *cognomen*. There is no example of identification by *praenomen* and *nomen*, and the use of the *cognomen* as the only or main identifying tag counts for 19 out of 23 cases. This indicates a definite change that can only be explained in chronological terms. The date of the siphon is unknown, but it is reasonable to surmise that the development of Aelia Capitolina, and the larger quantities of water the new city required, motivated its construction, or reconstruction. In contrast, the way of identifying the soldiers on the bread stamps, without using a *cognomen*, points to an earlier date, most likely before the end of the first century, during the first period that the Tenth Legion Fretensis was deployed in Jerusalem.

NOTES

¹ The excavations, carried out on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority between September 2005 and February 2009, were directed by Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah and Alexander Onn, with the participation of Shua Kisilevitz and Brigitte Ouahnouna (area supervisors). Another excavation season was conducted in 2010. The plan was prepared by surveyors Vadim Essman, Mark Kipnis, Mark Kunin, Yaakov Shmidov and draftspersons Natalia Zak, Elizabeth Belashov and Irena Berin. The finds of the Roman period were studied by Leah Di Segni (bread stamps), Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom (pottery), Yael Gurin-Rosen (glass), Gabriela Bijovsky (coins), Donald T. Ariel (flan mold), Silvia Rozenberg (fresco fragments), Brigitte Ouahnouna (jewelry), Shua Kisilevitz (stone vessels), Guy Stiebel (metalware), Orit Peleg-Barkat (architectural elements), Michael Sebbane (inscribed games), Liora Kolska Horwitz (archaeozoology), Elisabetta Boaretto and Steve Weiner (radiocarbon dating, Weizmann Institute, Rehovot). All finds were treated in the IAA laboratories. The bread stamps were

photographed by Clara Amit, and molded by Yosef Bukengolts. For preliminary reports, see Weksler-Bdolah et al. 2009; 2012; Weksler-Bdolah, Onn and Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2009; Weksler-Bdolah and Onn 2010.

² Wall 804 was preserved at a number of segments that were given separate appellations during the excavation: W804 (upper parts); W805, W806, W810, W811, W812 (lower parts). The numbers have been united here, as in a previous publication (Weksler-Bdolah et al. 2009), under W804 for convenience of description. A detailed treatment of W804 will be presented in the excavation's final report (Weksler-Bdolah and Onn, in prep.).

³ The 'Roman dump' will be discussed in detail in the excavation's final report (Weksler-Bdolah and Onn, in prep.). For a summary of the finds, see Weksler-Bdolah 2009:23–24.

⁴ About 15 coins were found within this deposit, but most of them were unidentifiable.

⁵ For examples, see *ILS* 3129, 7049, 7238; *CIL* III, 6395; VI, 8885, 9405, 11519, 12683, 19821, 37972;

VIII, 20960, 21893; IX, 2758; X, 1153, 2042, 7211, 8053; XI, 2265; XIII, 1584, 2949; *AE* 1966:70; 1971:227; 1975:272; 1991:1671.

⁶ It is not quite clear whether it was the Tenth Legion Fretensis or the Fourth Scythica that took part in this war, but the Fourth Scythica was moved from Germany to Syria shortly before the beginning of the campaign (Millar 1994:67; Goldsworthy 2003:312). Therefore, Casperius, who was already serving in the region in 51 CE, could not have belonged to the Fourth.

⁷ A *centuria Pomponii* worked on the High-Level Aqueduct of Jerusalem. See Di Segni 2002:45, No. 15.

⁸ Solin and Salomies (1994:217–284) provide a list of *nomina gentilicia* in reversed alphabetic order, on pp. 427–473 is a list of *cognomina* in reversed order. Page 257 contains all the *gentilicia* ending in –ponius, while p. 449 presents the single case of a *cognomen* ending in –ponius, i.e., the rare Saponius.

⁹ Solin and Salomies (1994) record no *nomina gentilicia* or *cognomina* ending in –uto. Among the *cognomina* they record Mutto, which might have an alternate spelling with one T, Muto. This is supported by the Greek form of the name, ΜÚΤΩΝ (Fraser and Matthews 1987:323; 2000:295). Other names with this ending, like Seuto, G(o)uto, Touto, are borne by natives in Gaul, Hiberia and other provinces, or are late: e.g., Bauto, consul with Arcadius in 385.

¹⁰ For Sutorius or Sutonium, a *nomen gentilicium*, see *PIR*² S 1046 (VII, 2 [2006]: 380–381); *AE* 1962, 317; 1964, 221; 1984, 183, 277; 1988, 1145; 2004, 1685, and many other examples. Other (rare) *gentilicia* that might be truncated in the same way: Clutorius: see *PIR*² C 1199 (II [1936]:286), Autonium (*CIL* V, 2902), Tautonium (*CIL* IX, 1984).

¹¹ For the name Antonius abbreviated by truncation ANTO, see e.g., *ILS* 2445, 7087.

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