

## Introduction

An excavation season at the area of Khan el Hilu was opened on April 26 2015 which lasted two and a half months and ended on June 11<sup>th</sup>. Additionally a summer camp took place between July 1<sup>st</sup> and July 19<sup>th</sup>.

Two excavation areas were opened, Area C and Area E, while both of them were continuations of previous excavation seasons.

## Area C

In Area C two squares (C9 and C10) (Plan 1) were continued which had been started to excavate during previous seasons. Both squares are located in close proximity to the western enclosure wall of the Khan.

### Square C9

Square C9 was rather sporadically excavated showing only thick fill layers covering the whole area of Square C9. This year's season was started with the continuation of the excavation Layer 381 which was defined during the 2014 Season. 381 was composed of brown soil mixed with small and fist sized stones. Layer 381 was replaced quickly with Layer 411 which is in fact the same locus as 381 but was given in order to establish a horizontal separation. 411 started at a height of 46.47m and was excavated almost half a meter down till a height of 46.12m.

### Square C10

In Square C10 the block of soil filling the space between walls W11 (southeast-northwest), W14/W13/W12 (northeast-southwest) and W5 (southwest-northeast) was excavated till stone layer 448, whose eastern part (L405, L409, L403) was already excavated during the 2014 Season.

All in all we excavated eight subsequent beaten earth floors with their infrastructures and continuing repairs.

The uppermost floor excavated was Floor 346 (surface 47.17–46.12) which was already exposed during the 2014 Season. This floor was made of greyish plaster and was set on a bedding of pebbles and compact earth (412 – 47.16-47.06).

415 (47.06-47.02) below 412 was the foundation of floor 346. It was made of compact brown soil. Floor 346 integrated the heads of the stones of platform 413/414 (47.15) in its surface.

Platform 413 was built of medium sized fieldstones and partially worked stones in secondary use (47.15-46.95). The extension of the platform was 1.55m (northeast-southwest) and 0.92m (southwest-northeast). The interior of the platform was filled with brown soil which yielded lots of modern finds

(modern glass, modern roof tiles and iron nails). The bottom of the platform/installation (47.06) was made of grey compressed plaster.

Below Floor 346 and its infrastructure (412/415) was Floor 416 (47.02-46.86) which was made of white plaster which showed signs of reparations (418 -47.05-46.92) and which was set on soil foundations 420, 421 and 423. In Floor 416 a negative impression of a (most likely wooden) pillar was found (419 bottom height: 46.83) which showed a thin layer of black ash. The use of the pillar is associated with Floors 416 and 346.

In the northern part of the room an additional floor 424 made of plaster was found which was set on soil foundation 425.

Below Floors 416 and Floor 424 the room seems to have been divided by a southeast-northwest running wall W22 (46.67-46.92) into a southern and a northern part.

Wall W22 was made of one row built of unworked fieldstones set on a small foundation made of fist sized unworked stones. The northern side was covered with whitish plaster. W22 bond with W23 which was already exposed during the 2014 season.

The floor which adjoined wall W22 on its northern side was Floor F432 (46.73-46.74) was made of grey plaster and was set on a foundation of small fieldstones (433 – 46.67-46.73). Below 433 another soil layer 434 (46.62-46.67) was detected.

South of W22 no floor adjoining the wall could be detected instead soil layer 420 which formed the foundation of Floor 416 which runs above W22. That means that this area was probably not in use during the functioning of wall W22.

Below W22 another sequence of plaster floors was found. In the southern part of the room beginning with Floor 428 (46.65-46.68) made of whiter plaster which was found in the southern part of the room and set on infrastructure 439 made of fist sized fieldstones and soil. In the northern part of the room a white plaster Floor 437 (46.61-46.66) could belong to the same phase as Floor 428.

Below floor 428 and its infrastructure 439 new walls emerged which served most likely as foundations of rising walls W5, W12/13/14 and W11. Below Wall W11 wall W101 was excavated (upper height 46.78m). Below wall W5 was W104 (upper height 46.68m). Below W12/13/14 was W100 (upper height 46.72m). It seems that W100 and W104 formed a corner and were overbuilt with wall W9, a pilaster like structure in the southwestern corner of the room. All lower walls were built of rough limestone ashlars set with no bonding.

Below layer 439 in the center of the room a round feature most likely a pit was found, filled with different subsequent layers. The uppermost layer is 440, followed by 443 and 447. The layers are composed of

brown soil mixed with ash and lots of charcoal, bones (partially with green coloring due to copper oxide), iron slag and melted bronze pieces. The uppermost height of the pit was 46.56m and the bottom was at 45.74m.

Below fill 441 (which is below infrastructure 439 of Floor 428) in the west an installation (452) was found set in rough surfaces of densely laid head sized stones (444 to the north and 449 to the south) close to W12/13/14. The upper height of 444 is 46.50 and of 449 46.43. Installation 452 (45.99-46.50) is a rectangular pit build of roughly worked midsized stones set without mortar binding. The bottom of the installation (45.99) is made of densely set river pebbles. The installation was filled with soft soil heavily mixed with dark grey ashes, charcoal bits and light grey lime.

Below 441 in the east were fills 445 and 446 which were set directly on stone pavement 448 which eastern part was already exposed during the 2014 season. The stone pavement shows a slight slope from south to north from 46.38 (south) to 46.15 (north).

Immediately east of installation 452 a section was excavated showing subsequent fills whereas 455 in the north and 456 in the south are the uppermost, followed by 458, 459, 460 and below that 464 (west) and 463 (east) whereas 463 is composed of brown soil mixed with mortar lumps and small stones, and 464 is brown relatively homogeneous soil. Interestingly fills 460 and 464 show almost exclusively sherds dating to the Byzantine period. Locus 463 could be the edge of a pit which continues eastward and could be related to circular pit L401 from Season 2014.

### **Area E**

In Area E (Plan 2) south of W60 from season 2014 the area was cleared reaching some 6m to the south. The fills which were found here are without exception modern yielding lots of modern waste, pipes, concrete blocks, glass and pottery sherds. These layers were 551 and 552 in the north and Loci 560 and 559 further south.

West of wall W61 of the 2014 season a sequence of modern fills 553, 554 and 555 was found whereas the uppermost fill was 550 followed by 553, 554 and 555. Below 554 walls W150 and W152 were found. The top height of W150 which divided the space west of W61 into a southern and a northern part was 47.74m. The two uppermost courses of W150 (47.74-47.84) were built of midsized unworked stones set in mortar. Wall W150 bonds with W61 and W151 at its eastern side. The south face of W150 was coated with a thick white plaster while the northern face was left rough.

At the northern end of the excavation area, west of W61 another wall 152 was found which runs most likely parallel to W150. W152 was built of small and medium fieldstones. Its uppermost height is 47.47m.

In the northern part, north of W150 modern fill 561 was excavated composed of soil heavily mixed with pebbles and lots of pottery sherds. 561 is bound by W150 to its south, W61 to its east and W152 to its north.

In the southern part, south of W150 fill 557 was found (47.11-47.73).

East of Fill 557 the southern continuation of W61, wall W151 was found. This wall was built of large unworked fieldstones set in mortar. The west face of the wall was coated with a white plaster approx. 1cm thick. The western side of W151 shows a rectangular niche (length: 1.20m and width: 0.40m) whose interior was completely coated with white thick plaster. During a later stage it was blocked with small and midsized stones set in thick mortar. The new western face of the wall was subsequently plastered over.

The area between wall W61 in the west and wall W59/51/54 was excavated starting with Locus 563 which lies below Locus 527 and an upper modern pipe which runs north-south in the middle of the area.

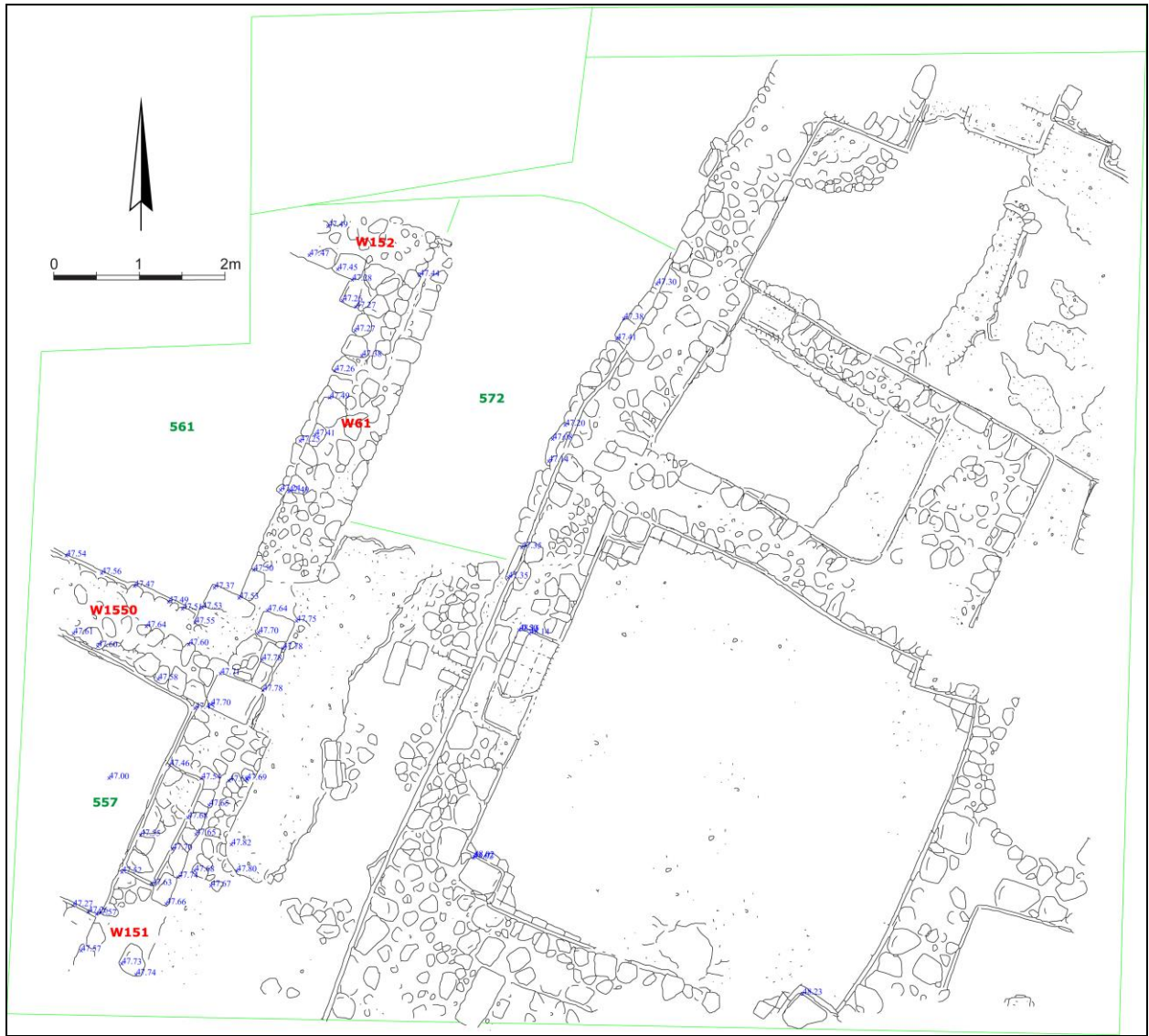
Below 563 (47.00-47.33) another set of modern pipes was found which divided the area into two zones, a southern one which was excavated as 564 (46.98-47.12) and a northern and eastern part which was excavated as 563. After removal of the pipes a new locus was opened 565 (greyish brown soil), which was followed by another fill 567. All of those fills seem to be different walking surfaces of the road or alley which run here. Below Locus 567 the area divided into three loci: 568 to the south, 569 (north west) and 570 (north east). Below the eastern part of 568 and the southern part of 570 locus 571 was found located in the southeastern corner of the excavation area. Locus 569 continued below Loci 570 and 568.

The last locus excavated below 569 and 571 was Locus 572 till a height of 46.5. The locus yielded high amounts of mixed pottery.

In the eastern face of wall W61 an intact arch was discovered. In the western face of W59 a bulge could be detected in the central area of the wall.



Plan 1



Plan 2