

GIRDI QALA, STRATIGRAPHICAL TRENCH B

Laurent Colonna d'Istria, Alisée Devillers and Mustafa Ahmad

In 2016, we enlarged the trench B to the east by completing the excavation of square 1. The trench covered 50 sqm in all and 10 stratigraphic levels were identified on approximately 2m of deposit, belonging to three cultural periods, Hellenistic, Sassanian and Islamic.

LEVEL 1 (MIDDLE ISLAMIC PERIOD)

The first level noticed is characterized by fire installations : loc. 46, 47 and 48 on the northern corner of the square 1 (alt. min. 652, 94 m – alt. max. 652, 89 m), and loc. 49 with vertical stones laying on edge (alt. 653,00 m) on the eastern part of this square (fig. 1). The fire installation loc. 49 (fig. 2) covered up partially a fifth fire installation, loc. 50 surrounded by ashy earth. This square was an open space, due to the proximity with the slope of the tell. Some stones without obvious connexion were found near the southern-east berm. The archaeological artefacts discovered (potsherds and fragment of iron ring) allow us to date this level to the Middle Islamic Period, but contained also Late Sasanian material (fig. 3).

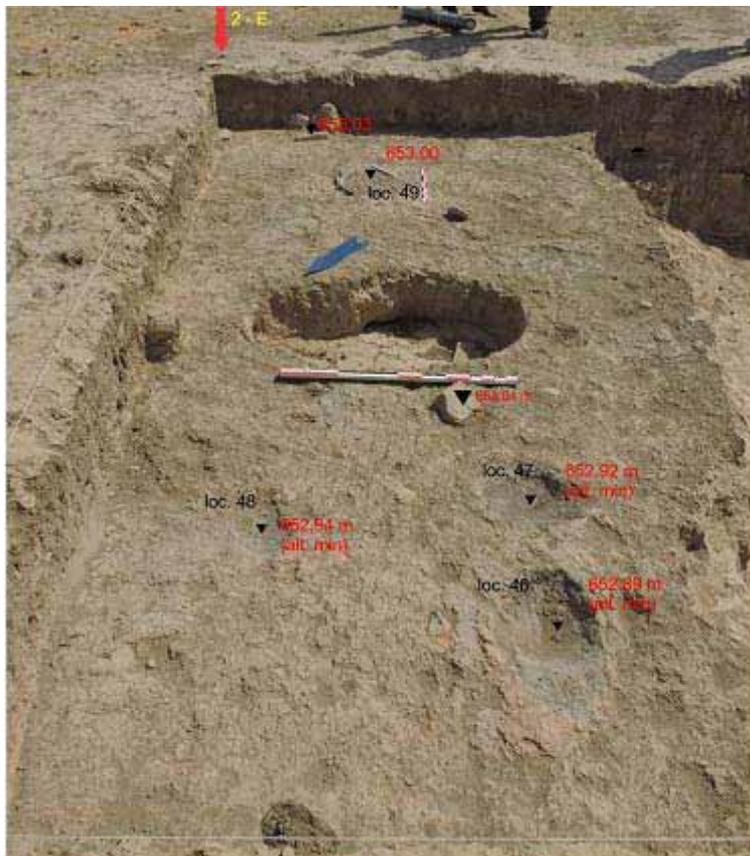


Fig. 1 - Square 1 - fire installations loc. 46, 47, 48 and loc. 49 – view to the south-east.

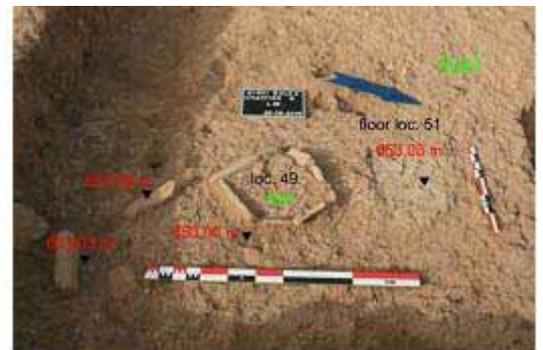


Fig. 2 - Fire installation loc. 49 view to the south-west.



Fig. 3 - QG B -1043- intrusive Late Sasanian potsherds from the Level 1.

LEVEL 2 (EARLY MIDDLE ISLAMIC PERIOD, C10-11TH/12TH CENTURIES AD)

Level 2 is the digging level of five pits. Two of those are located on the northern-east berm: loc. 57 (alt. 652, 62 m) and loc. 58 (NV 1049 and 1060, alt. max. 652, 66 m – alt. min 652, 34 m). The pit 63 (NV 1053 and 1057, alt. max 652, 64 – alt. min. 652, 44 m) is alongside the northern-west berm. The pit 61 was dug south of loc. 60 (NV 1059, alt. max. 652, 6 m – alt. min 651, 94 m). The last pit, loc. 28 (NV 1072, alt. max. 652, 74 m – alt. min. 651, 98 m) is located at the centre of the square 1 and was partly excavated during the 2015 season. Once again, it seems that this digging level can be attributed to the early Middle Islamic period: glazed pottery from loc. 63, unglazed comb ware pottery from loc. 29 (fig. 4), metal plaque with two holes and the glass bangle from loc. 58, a needle and a metal scoria from loc. 61.



Fig. 4a - Potsherd from pit loc. 28 – GQ B 1072-3
(unglazed pottery)



Fig. 4b - Potsherds from pit loc. 63 = GQ B 1053
(glazed pottery)

Fig. 4 - Potsherds from loc. 28 et 63 (« early Middle Islamic period »).

LEVEL 3A (EARLY MIP)

Although Level 3 has been partially disrupted by the pits from the Level 2 (loc. 61 and loc. 57), two small stone-built walls have been identified in the south-east of the square 1: loc. 54 (alt. max. 652, 85 m – alt. min 652, 73 m) and loc. 55 (alt. max. 652, 98 m – alt. min. 652, 66 m). A red brick could be a door-socket (showing a door between loc. 54 and loc. 55). The fire installation loc. 50 discovered partially under loc. 49 and alongside the wall 54 could be linked to wall 54 (fig. 5). These two small walls (loc. 54 and 55), composed of rubble stone, belong to the same building, to which must be linked to the wall loc. 27 discovered during the previous campaign (fig. 6 ; see report 2015). At the north of these walls, it seems that we are here in an outdoor space. According to the sherds from this Level, Level 3A may be dated to the early Middle Islamic Period (fig. 7).

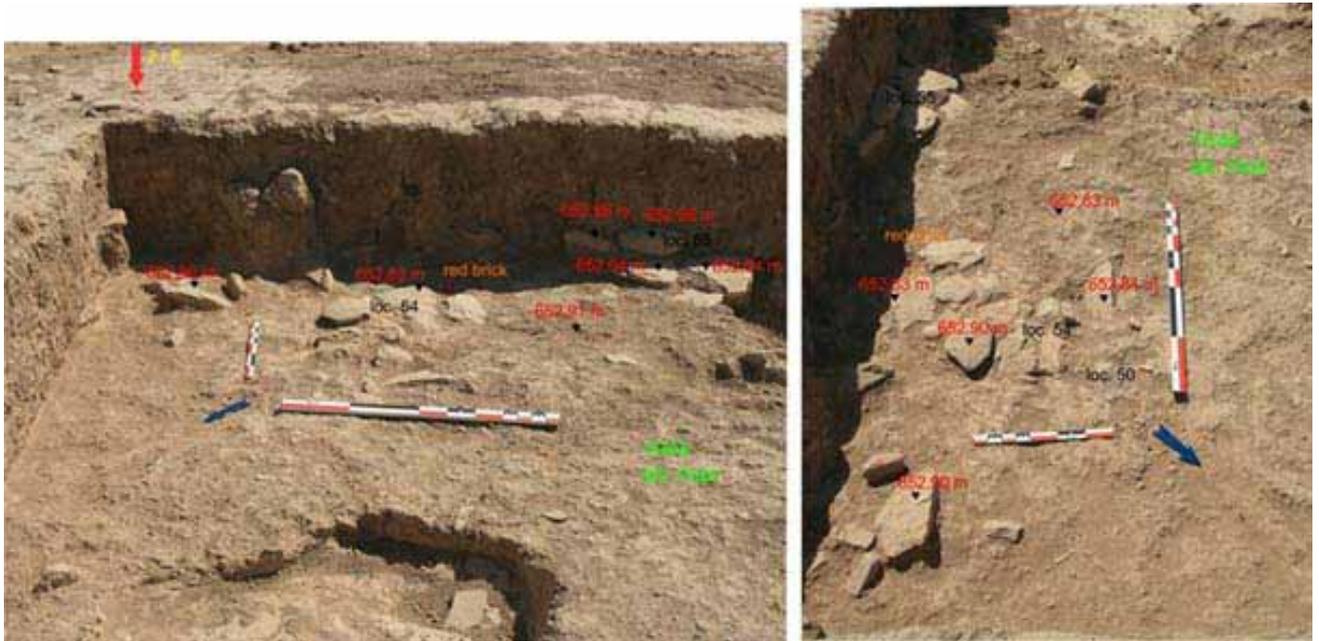


Fig. 5 - Views of the Level 3a during excavation.

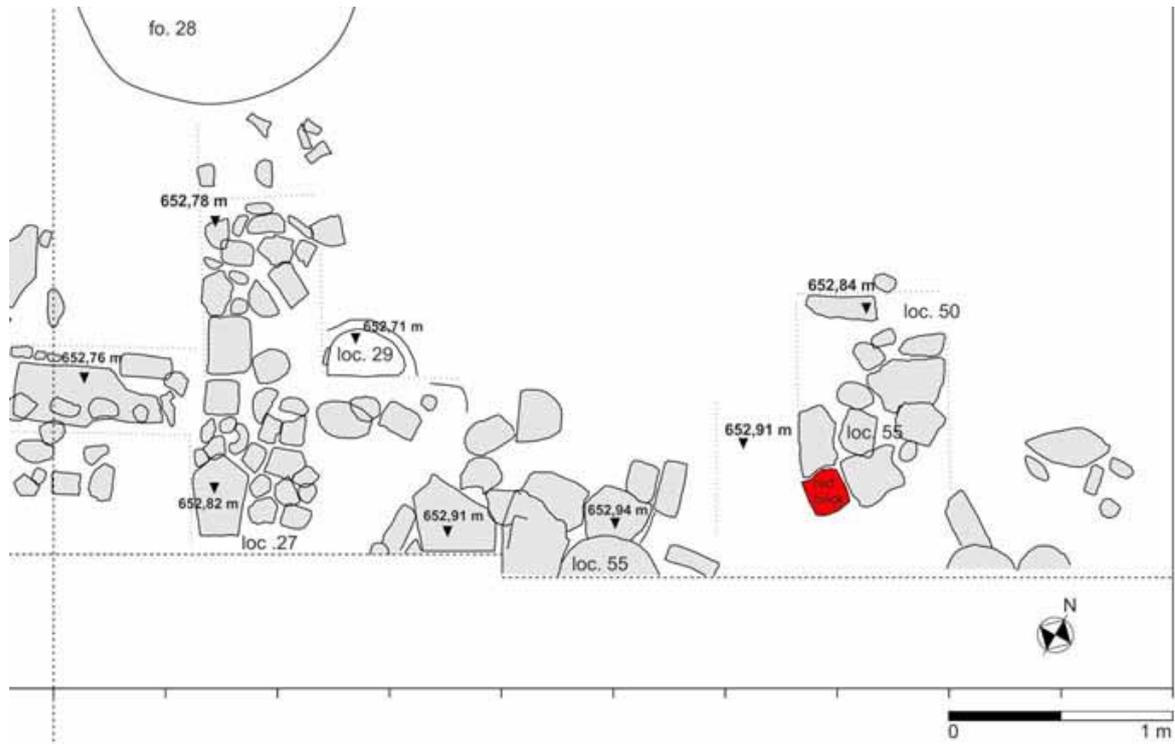


Fig. 6 - Level 3a -seasons 2015 and 2016.

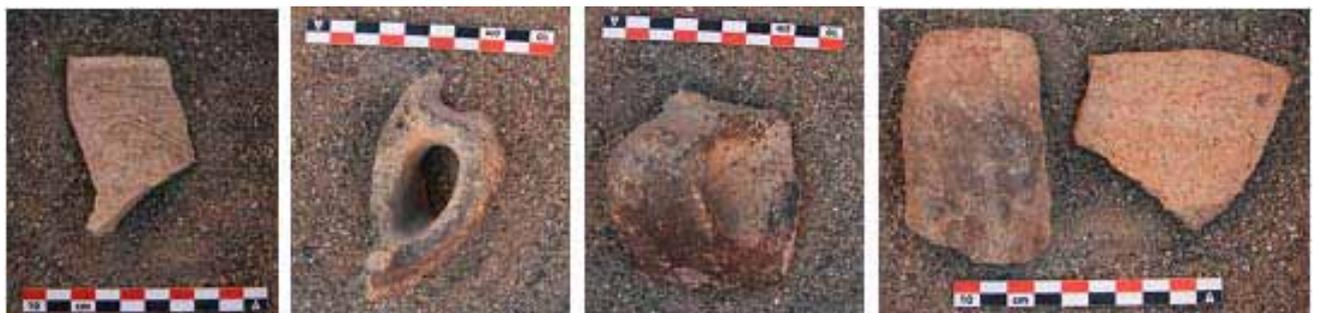


Fig. 7 - Potsherds from the Level 3A - GQ B-1045 («early Middle Islamic periods »).

LEVEL 3B (EARLY MIP)

Level 3b is characterized by a level of pits: loc. 73 (NV 1062, alt. 652, 33 m) at the north of the square, loc. 75 (NV 1063, alt. 652, 18 m) at the south-east of the square, and loc. 33 (alt. 652,45 m) at the east of the square. In the pit 73, we discovered a grinding stone (39 × 43 cm, alt. 652, 34 m), glass fragments, and a jar fragment with handle (fig. 8).



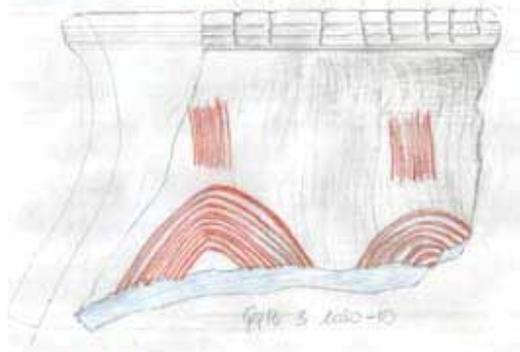
Fig. 8a - GQ B – 1062 = pit loc. 73
(early Middle Islamic periods)

Fig. 8b - GQ B – 1063 – pit loc. 75 (early Middle Islamic periods)

Fig. 8 - Potsherds from pits - Level 3b.

LEVEL 4A (EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD)

This level is characterized by a mud-bricks-built wall (loc. 59) and its associated floor (loc. 62), on the northern-east part of square 1. Unfortunately, loc. 59 was largely destroyed because of the level 2 pits (loc. 61 and loc. 21). Nevertheless, we discovered at least three headers bricks and its joints. Their dimensions are 43 × 13 cm and more or less 10 cm width. It is possible that the wall loc. 30, discovered in 2015, was contemporaneous with wall 59 (same elevation). Potsherds discovered during the excavation of this level suggest that it is dating from the Late-Sassanian or Early Islamic Period (fig. 9).



Preliminary drawing
Potsherd GQ B 1050-10

Fig. 9 - Square 1, view to the south-east and Potsherd GQ B 1050 from Level 4.

LEVEL 4B (LATE SASSANIAN PERIOD)

Close to loc. 59, we found loc. 65, a wall with a different orientation, which allows us to assume that a connection between those two constructions does not exist. We noticed at least two bricks in foundation and one stone slab that is part of the wall-foundation. A stone door-socket was found near loc. 65 and seems to be in connection with it (fig. 10). Thus, it is possible that this wall was the limit of an outdoor/inner area. After removing loc. 59, it appears that loc. 65 runs under this wall. Loc. 65 was associated to a destruction layer with remains of eroded bricks.



Fig. 10 - Square 1,
view to the south-east - Levels 4a and 4b.

LEVEL 5A (SASSANIAN PERIOD)

Underneath the levels 4A and 4B on the northern part of square 1, the walls 79 and 81, in connection with the floor 71, seem to be part of a large building. Wall 79 (alt. max. 652,32 m – alt. min. 652,27 m) is located under loc. 65, in the same orientation (NE-SW) (fig. 11). We found alongside this mud-bricks wall the fire installation loc. 74 (NV 1066) (fig. 12)

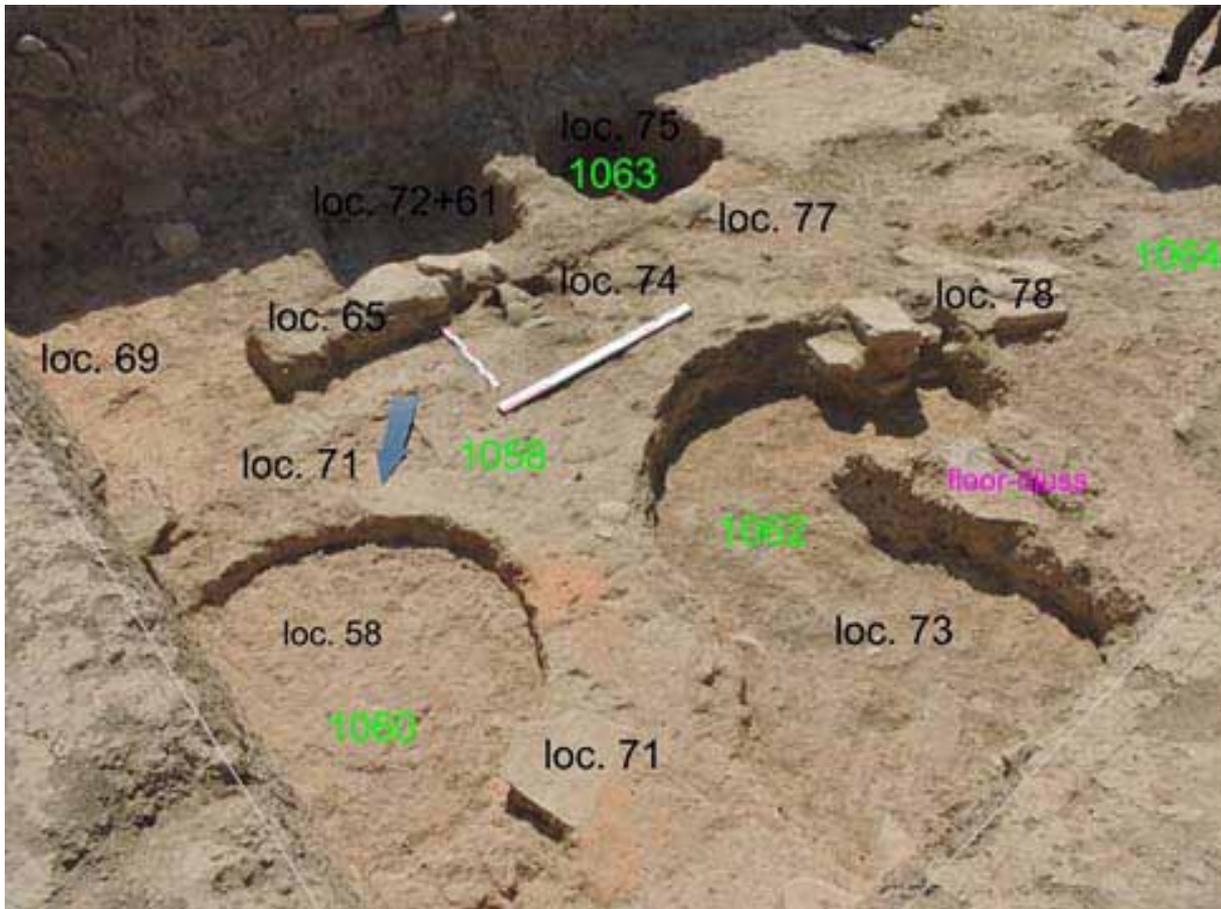


Fig. 11 - Square 1-view to the South - Levels 4 and 5.

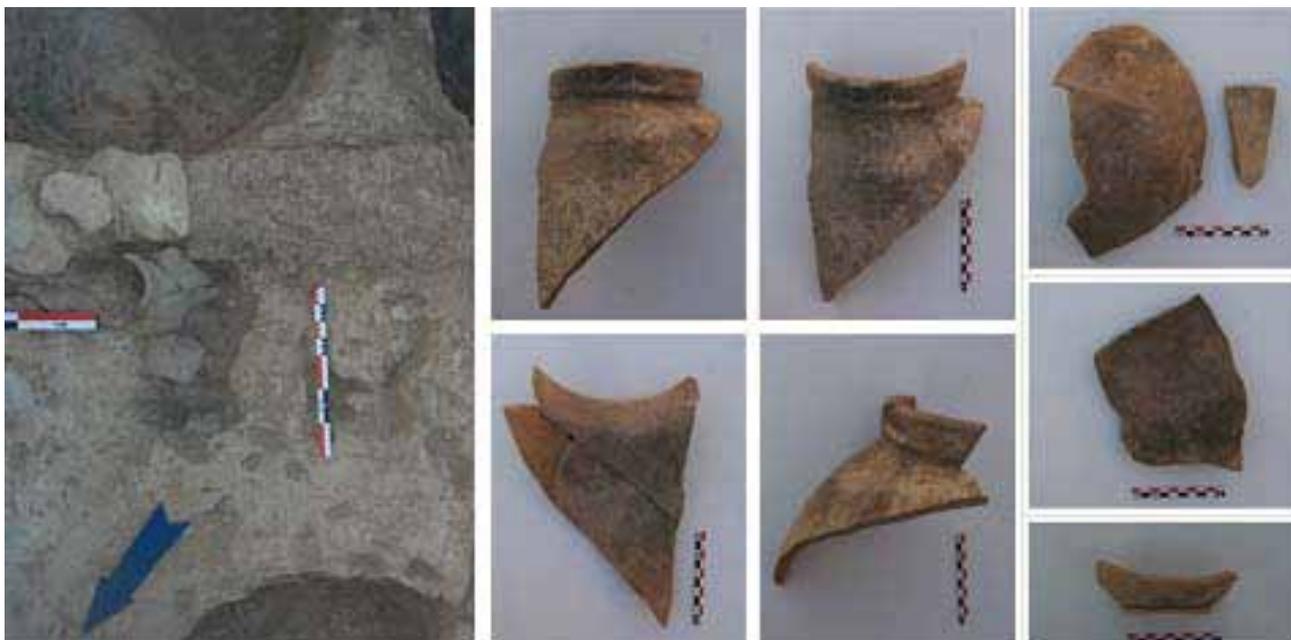


Fig. 12 - Sasanian potsherds from the fire installation loc. 74.

composed of, on its eastern part, one jar fragment and at least two bricks on its western part. It was filled with ashy and silty earth. Bricks were lying on the floor. It could be a platform structure. Between the pits 61 and 75, the wall 81 (alt. max. 652, 28 – alt. min. 651, 97) is perpendicular to loc. 79. It was partly destroyed by those pits and was connected with a pot containing parts of a dog skeleton (loc. 62).

More interesting is this cooking pot (in loc. 72, alt. max. 652, 29 m – alt. min. 651, 94 m) discovered at the south boundary of the pit 61 (fig. 13). The whole pot was found in different fragments, and have been restored (fig. 14). The bottom of it was burned and the pottery was surrounded by a skeleton of a dog (spine at the SSE of the pot and the legs at the NNW). The

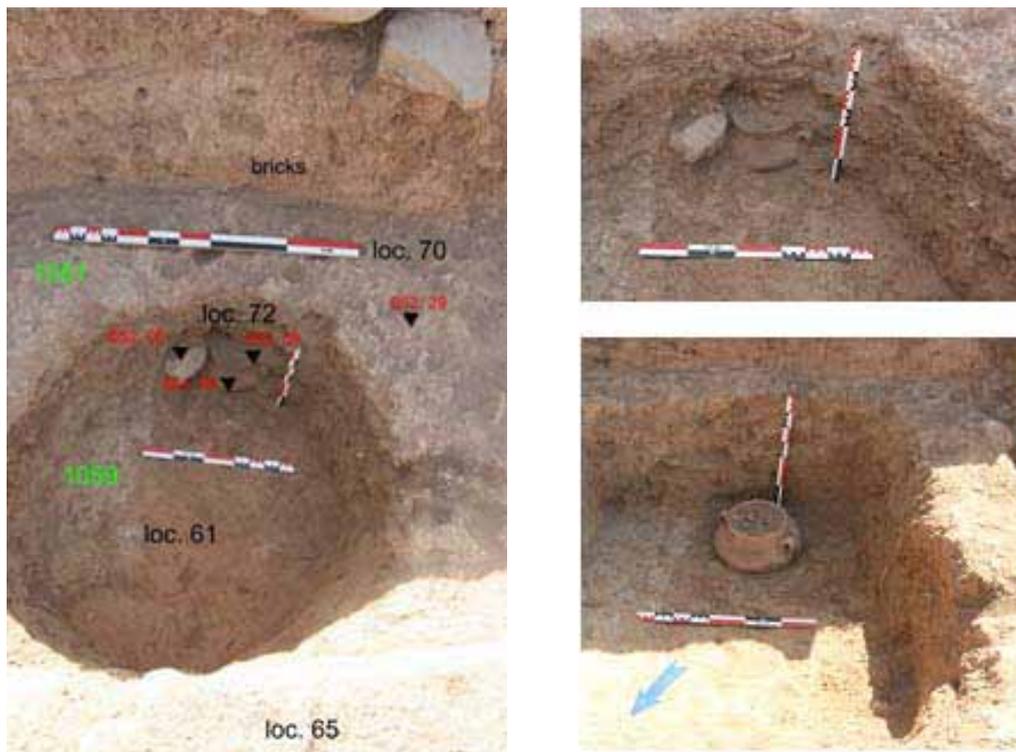


Fig. 13 - Location of the dog grave loc. 72.

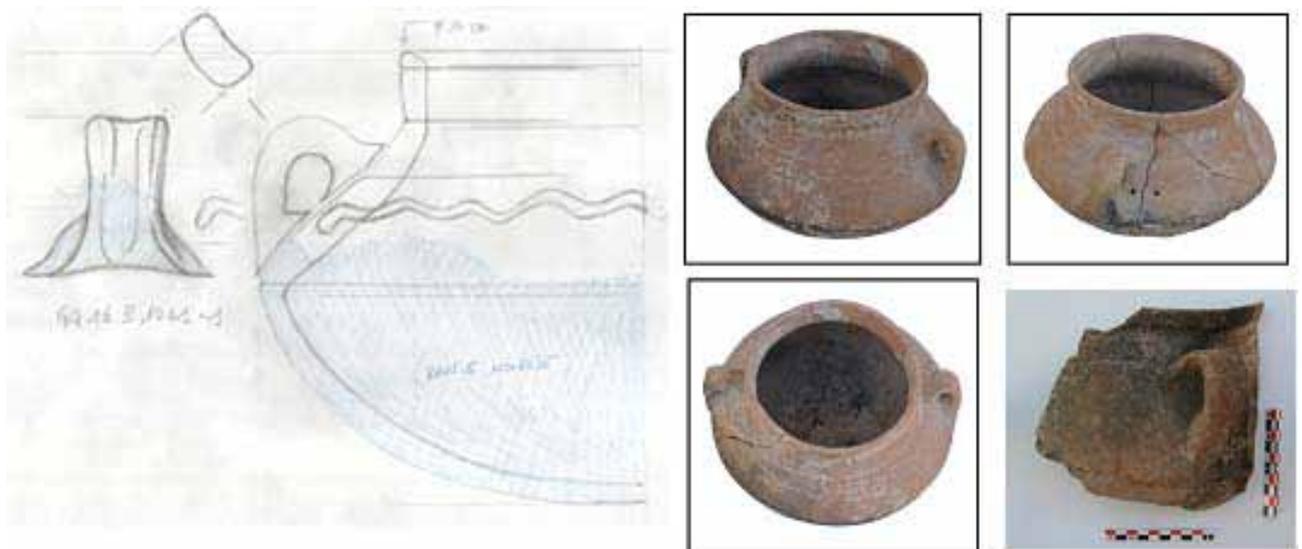


Fig. 14 - Cooking pot of the dog grave, loc. 72, QQB.Tc.1061-1 - and potsherd discovered over of the cooking pot QQB-1061 - early Middle Islamic Period.

skull and one vertebra were located inside. According to its linear motive and its shape, the pot is a typical Islamic cooking pot (early MIP, 11-12th centuries AD), well spread in Sulaymaniah (Ahmad, *infra*), and the related tomb is clearly intrusive into a Sasanian level.

LEVEL 5B (SASSANIAN PERIOD)

This level is characterized by two stone walls. The first (loc. 83, alt. 652, 22 m) oriented east-west and located under loc. 79, and the second (loc. 78, alt. 653, 33 m) parallel to the first in the west part of square 1. Those stone building walls are partly destroyed by the pit 73 (level 3B). We noticed also two groups of square-shaped bricks (35 × 35 × 10 cm), loc. 85 (alt. 652,28 m) and loc. 86 (alt. 652,27 m) (fig. 15 and fig. 16). We did not finish the excavation of loc. 78 (NV 1074), so we are not able to give an interpretation of this structure. It is possible that it was associated to the *djuss* floor found in 2015.

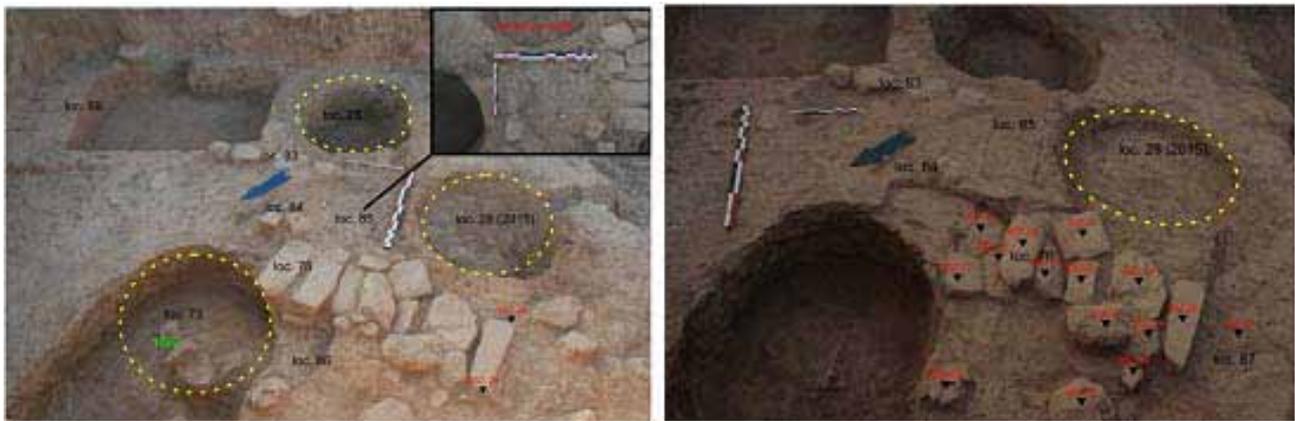


Fig. 15 - Squares 1 and 2 - views to the south-east - Level 5B.



Fig. 16 - Squares 1 and 2 - view to west and the tannur loc. 36.

LEVEL 6 (HELLENISTIC PERIOD)

This is the deepest level reached this season, on the West part of the square 2. We noticed one floor and a tannur (loc. 36, alt. 651, 96 m), partly damaged by the stony pit loc. 35 (alt. 651, 96 m) (fig. 16). On the NO berm, a fire installation loc. 88 (alt. 651, 86 m) has been discovered, surrounded by ashy earth and located underneath structure 78, which was partly removed. We thus assume that loc. 36 and loc. 88 were part of a same floor, characterized by clay earth and eroded bricks. It delivered a new kind of pottery decoration, with “half-moon” motifs. This potsherd (GQ 16 1075) allows us to date this level to the Hellenistic period (fig. 17).



Fig. 17 - Potsherd with « half-moon » motifs
GQ 16 1075 (loc. 87) - Hellenistic Period.

LEVEL 6' (HELLENISTIC PERIOD)

Loc. 69 is attested by a reddish wall found in the eastern corner of the square 1. It is composed of red/orange bricks of 35 × 35 × 10 cm (fig. 17 and fig. 18). It counts at least five layers of well-preserved mudbricks. Its excavation is ongoing and we did not notice a floor connected to it (except a shallow white line). It seems that this is the most well preserved structure yet found in the trench (fig. 18) and should be more investigated next season.

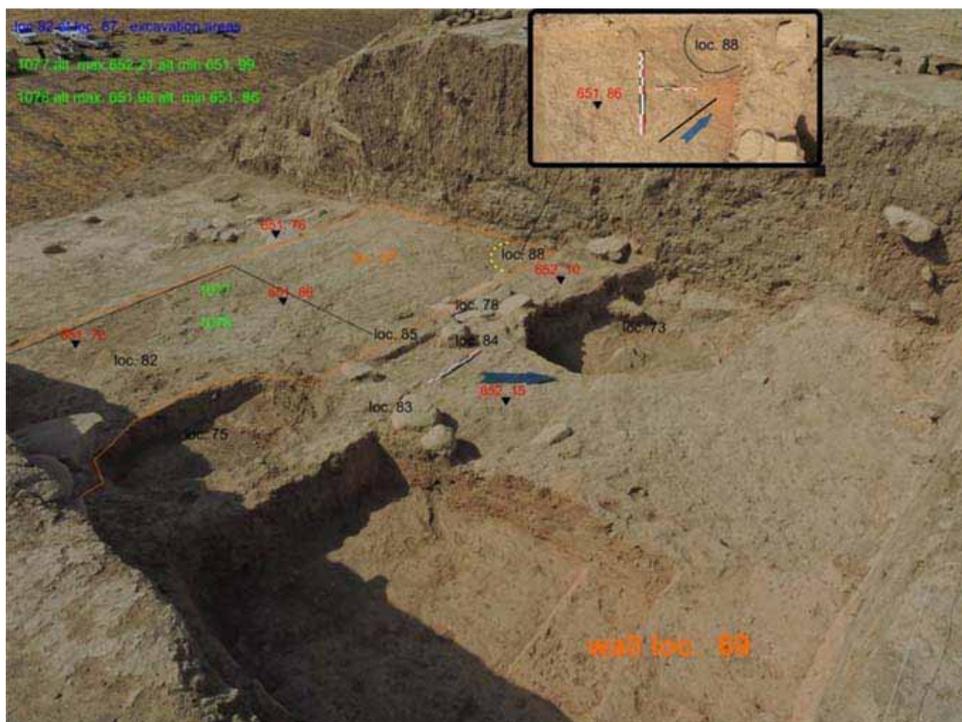


Fig. 18 - Squares 1 and 2 - View to the west at the end of the excavation - October 2016.

