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Recent Research 2013/14: Insights into a new Enclosure at Göbekli Tepe

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Recent fieldwork at the Pre-Pottery Neolithic hilltop sanctuary of Göbekli Tepe has been largely dedicated to essential provisions in advance of construction work on permanent shelters which are to be erected at the site in 2015 (cf. Dietrich *et al.* 2014). Sadly, as it turned out, work in the 2014 spring season was to be the final season led by Klaus Schmidt, who passed away suddenly in July 2014. Work in this last season focused on the excavation of areas in the so-called *Northwest Depression*, a low lying western part of the site, located to the north of the *Southwest Mound* (Fig. 1). The aim of these investigations, originally initiated in 2011, has been to ascertain whether these areas would also yield features, *i.e.* monumental circular enclosures of the PPNA (in some cases superimposed by smaller rectangular PPNB buildings), comparable to those previously encountered in the so-called *Southeast Depression*, the main excavation area of the site. As already indicated by geophysical surveys, evidence for

monumental structures was certainly expected, and has meanwhile been confirmed through our fieldwork (cf. Becker *et al.* 2012; Dietrich *et al.* 2013).

In the 2013 excavation seasons, and in spring 2014, considerable progress was made in the excavation of five deep soundings. These are required for the foundations of the new permanent shelter in the *NW-Depression* which will be drilled into the natural bedrock beneath the site. In addition to large quantities of preserved organic material, important for radiocarbon dating, the excavation of these soundings has also led to the discovery of PPN features (channels for water?) carved into the natural bedrock. It is highly likely that these features are contemporaneous with the monumental enclosures at the site.

The most important feature discovered in *NW-Depression*, is a new enclosure currently under excavation in areas K10-24, K10-25, K10-34 and K10-35 (cf. Dietrich *et al.* 2014: 14 with Fig. 6 & 7). This structure is now known as Enclosure H, following the established scheme of naming enclosures in the order of their discovery (Fig. 2). In 2011, one of the central pillars and four pillars of the surrounding ring of this new stone circle were excavated. Even at this early stage, it was apparent that the central pillar had been toppled and broken in antiquity, thus mirroring the situation already encountered in Enclosure C. During the spring season of 2013, the ring-wall of Enclosure H was excavated in area



Fig. 1: Göbekli Tepe: overhead view of the excavation areas (Photo: Erhan Küçük, DAI Orient Department)

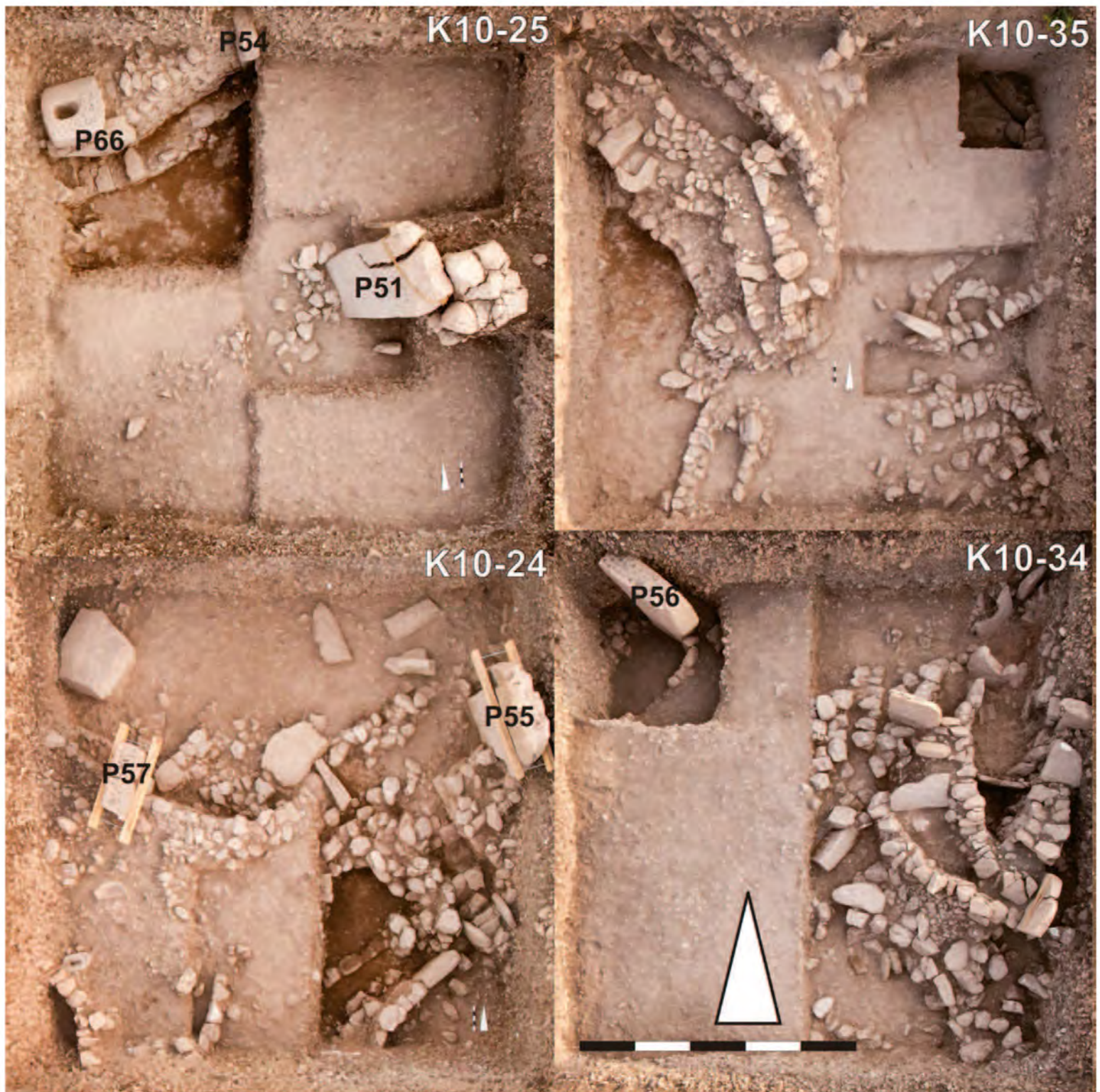


Fig. 2: Overhead view of Enclosure H, current state of excavation (Photo: Nico Becker, DAI Orient Department)

K10-24. The northern section of the trench clearly shows the outline of a large pit-feature that seems to have been dug to locate and damage the central pillars. Additionally, a large, newly discovered pillar fragment found in this area can probably be assigned to the second of the two central pillars. Post-use destruction of Enclosure H is further indicated by the remaining *in-situ* shaft fragment of a smashed pillar of the stone circle located between P55 and P 57. Further, the wall of the enclosure – with a niche and bench structure similar to those observed in other enclosures in the main excavation area – shows considerable signs of (post-use) disturbance.

Continued excavation work in the recent field seasons, has led to the discovery of additional monoliths, bringing

the total number of pillars discovered in Enclosure H to six. In addition to the central Pillar 51 (Fig. 3), which carries on its western broad side the depiction of a large feline, there are five pillars discovered in the enclosure wall: Pillar 55 seems to be undecorated; here is the richly adorned Pillar 56; Pillar 57 with a newly discovered relief (comprising two antithetic snakes flanking a round object) on its front narrow side (*cf.* Dietrich *et al.* 2014: Fig. 7); and Pillars 54 and 66, recently excavated in the northern part of the enclosure wall (for the interpretation of such animal reliefs as part of the symbolic world of the Early Neolithic see for example Peters / Schmidt 2004 or Schmidt 2012).

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