# Field report of work in Biet Loya on 3/6,17/6, 24/6,

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# **Special Thanks**

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## Introduction

This is a field report of the work done on the site of Beit Loya on the days of 3/6, 17/6, 24/6. The building is a byzantine church with a large mosaic floor. When hte initial excavation was done the gaps in the mosaic were filled with cement as were the boarders of the mosaic where there were large losses. The site has minimal maintenance and there is some plant growth as well as the accumulation of dust and debris. The site has logistic issues due to its far removed location. The site is located near a military training ground and is only accessible one day a week and only until noon. All the supplies to be used for conservation work need to be brought in and removed on the day of work due to there being no storage at the site.



#### **Implementation on 3/6**

Initial day on site.

All the materials that are needed on site have to be brought every time a crew goes out to the site. The truck is loaded up with pre-mixed mortar, mesh nets for shade, a hoe, small tools like brushes and spatulas, water both for drinking as well as for mixing into the mortar, prepping areas for mortar and to put on blankets when the work is done to slow the drying process, cushions ,coffee and a burner.



Fig.1

- After Arrival on the site first thing is to unload the truck.
- The site had been left untouched for some time by the evidence of dust and debris on the surface as well as some plant growth in the close vicinity of the mosaics and the building structure.
- The First thing done was to sweep away the surface debris from the area on the left hand side of the main columned area. Once this was done and the area could be viewed properly a large shade was set up so that work could start.
- While the cleaning was being done the Mortar that was brought was being mixed together and then placed in buckets and brought over to the work area.
- Initially when the site was exposed the gaps in the mosaic were filled with cement. Both gaps in the main body and the boarder of the mosaic with an adjacent wall. This cement is chiseled out carefully not to tear up the tessera. Once the area is cleaned it is wet with water and then a layer of Hydraulic lime still in powdered form is put down and then the mortar is put on top of that and smoothed out leaving it slightly lower then the level of the tessera. The mortar is allowed to set up slightly and then it is covered in dirt and hit with a brush to adhere it to the surface of the mortar. This is for color and texture. The areas that have new fills are covered with a thick cloth blanket and then the blanket is wet. Only a small section of the floor was touched due to time constraints. By noon the site must be cleared out so the shade it taken down and all the materials are re packed into the truck and the crew leaves.

# **Implementation on 17/6**

- The same beginning routine as 3/6, loading up the truck with all the supplies that we will need for the day and then moving out.
- A different area was worked on and a different kind of implementation was done. In the initial area of the larger part of the church at the top of the stairs there is a large lacuna with small islands located intermittently.
- The far right side was picked as a starting point. A large shade was put up. The large lacuna was dug up removing the surface layer of uneven terrain. The cement around the edges that was adhered to the mosaic was also attempted to be removed and was successful in some cases but some was left.
- While the area is being dug up stones are collected that are between 8 and 15 cm long and Xcm wide. The mortar that was brought is also being mixed together with water and a little hydraulic lime. Once the area is ready the stones are placed within it side by side touching to make a new layer across the dirt ground(Fig2.1). In some areas the depth of the floor compared to the height of the mosaic was enough that two layers of stones had to be put down. The stones are wet with water, then a layer of hydraulic lime is placed over that and then the mortar is

dumped by the bucket onto the area. This is then smoothed out and brought to the proper level with the mosaic(Fig2.2). This is done systematically, one area at a time usually coinciding with one bucket of mortar. Once the mortar set ups it is covered with dirt and then tamped with



Fig. 2.3



Fig. 2.1



Fig. 2.2



Fig. 2.4

a brush(Fig 2.3,2.4). The area was then covered with blankets and then the blankets were wet and then 2x4s and rocks are used to keep them weighted down(Fig 2.5). An area around 2x2 meters was completed.

• Once again around 12 00 the site is packed up, the shade is taken down, the blankets from two weeks ago are collected and taken back with all the tools and material.





#### **Implementation on 24/6**

- Same initial routine as 3/6 and 17/6. Truck is loaded up to full capacity with the same supplies with the addition of more water and a pickaxe.
- The area worked on is the continuation of the work done on 17/6. The same methodology is implemented. The ground is dug up to make way for the new statumen(3.1), while this is being done stones are gathered and the mortar is mixed. This area was not as deep and so required one layer of stones and in some places no stones in others.



• The main difference in this area was the islands of tessera. There were intact sections located in the middle of the lacuna Fig.3.1

surrounded by cement. The cement was carefully removed along the edge of the island that would be touched by the new mortar(Fig 3.2,3.3). A makeshift level was also used so check the level of the statumen in the forward area.

- Some plant life was also found under the surface these were forcibly removed with hand tools(Fig 3.4,3.5).
- The stones were wet with water and then covered in hydriodic lime and then had the mortar put on one bucket at a time. The area was then smoothed out and made level(3.6-3.8).
- Where the Mortar and the tessera islands touched a raised lip was made.
  Extending 2-3 cm out from the edge of the tessera on the same plane and then sloped down into the main body of the mortar area. At





Fig. 3.3







Fig. 3.6



Fig. 3.5



Fig 3.7

this point all of the brought mortar had been used up coincidentally it was almost 12 00 and the site had to be vacated soon.

- While this was being done the blankets were removed from the area done the previous week and the area was swept slightly to check the work that was done(fig 3.9).
- The area also had to be utilized as footing position to put dirt and then tamp the dirt down into the area completed on this day. This was done over the entirety of the new area and then covered with blankets which were wet and then kept down with rocks and 2x4s. The area was then packed up and all the materials loaded into the truck and then the crew exited the site.



Fig. 3.8



Fig. 3.9

### Materials/Tools\_

Mortar - Mix composed of Slaked Lime, Hydraulic Lime, Sand, Crushed Lime Stone, Lime stone Powder, and Ashes Hydraulic Lime Mixing Bowl/Tub - Container used to mix te mortar from the buckets with water and the lime in large quantities Buckets - Used to transport the mortar to the site as well transport mortar from the mixing area to the work area. Shade Water - Used for mixing the mortar, drinking and soaking the blankets Trowel - For smoothing out the larger fills Spatulas - For smaller losses and creating the lip Small Pick Axe Large Pick Axe Cushions Coffee and Burner

## **Comments/Notes**

As stated in the introduction there are a number of logistic issues with the work on the site. One of the main issues is only being able to work half a day one day a week means only limited amounts of work can be accomplished even by a medium sized crew working through that whole time. This means that the conservation process as a whole will be very drawn out. It also means that the effect of the work being done would be evaluated on a weekly basis and any number of issues could arise while the there is no one on site. The lack of a storage area also means that all the supplies must be taken to and from the site or be left on site unattended where they could be removed by trespassers, animals or even the weather. Even if there was a storage unit it will be not be seen or utilized for a week it could suffer the same way as if the materials were out in the open and then when a crew arrives for work they are missing materials and cannot work at all. The lack of a water source also is an issue both for work and for future uses of the site. If tourists are going to come to the site there would need to be facilities and its remote location makes that an issue.

# **Photo List**

Fig. A Map - Dagan Farancz

Fig 1.1 Filled Truck - Dagan Farancz

- Fig 2.1 Sone Laying Dagan Farancz
- Fig 2.2 Mortar Placement Dagan Farancz
- Fig 2.3 Dirt Placement Dagan Farancz
- Fig 2.4 Tamping Dirt Dagan Farancz
- Fig 2.5 Water on the Blankets Dagan Farancz
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