



Sounding A1

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION IN AMYAN I

REPORT OF THE FIRST CAMPAIGN (2019)

Edited by Barbara COUTURAUD



General Directorate of Antiquities in Kurdistan

SOUNDING A1

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Sounding A1 was opened on May 21 and closed on June 12. It is located at the top of the step trench, and a rectangle 10 m long and 3 m wide was laid out. Because the campaign lasted only 1 month – it was only possible to work on 15 m². Hence, the lower half of the sounding remains unexcavated.

The highest part of the step trench is located in this sounding, in the SW corner at an elevation of 358.30 m. The lowest elevation reached in sounding A1 is 355.56 m in the SE corner, at the end of the campaign (Fig. 1).

The main goal of this sounding was to establish a stratigraphic phasing and to find material *in situ* in order to understand the dating of the layers. In total, 25 stratigraphic units were recorded in the sounding, and 30 objects, most of them being terracotta slag.

Description

The first layer corresponds to the surface (**1000**). The layer beneath is an erosion wash (**1001**). It is the layer in which most of the objects were found, such as a clay nail (AM19-A1-1001-02) (Fig. 9), a token (AM19-A1-1001-05) and an unfinished clay lamp (AM19-A1-1001-04) (Fig. 8); of course, none of these can be considered as good dating evidence. Animal bones (AM19-A1-1001-01) and a piece of slag (AM19-A1-1001-03) were also found.

The first clear level is a layer (**1003a**) resting above a pavement made of broken, reused *tabuk* (**1003b**, top 357.28 m). It is 218 cm long and 90 cm wide (Fig. 2 & 3). This pavement is associated with a wall, clearly distinguishable by its light colour and its hardness (**1004**); it could be a *pise* wall since no clear bricks were recognizable. The highest elevation of the wall is at 357.73 m and its lowest at 357.15 m. It is 210 cm long and 50 cm wide. Inside it were found some animal bones (AM19-A1-1004-01) and a piece of slag (AM19-A1-1004-02). S of the wall is a layer in which bigger sherds were found (**1009**). A stone tool, perhaps a crusher (AM19-A1-1009-01), and a flint flake (AM19-A1-1009-02) were also found. On the other side of the wall 1004 was a layer in

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which there was a small alignment of mud-brick next to the W section (**1013**, top 357.04 m, bottom 357.17 m). S of this alignment, in the SW corner, some pebbles with some ash were found, which looked like a fireplace. The pavement 1003b might be associated with a layer in which two pieces of *tabuk* going to the N of the sounding were found (**1007**, top 357.27 m) (Fig. 2 & 3). The function of these two pieces of *tabuk* remains unknown.

These pieces of *tabuk* and the layer 1007 rest on a perfectly straight alignment of eight stones (**1008**, top 357.03 m / 357.14 m) (Fig. 4). They were first interpreted as a step for the pavement 1003b but they actually go under it, which disproved the hypothesis. Some animal bones were found in this layer (AM19-A1-1008-01). Associated with the stones 1008 was a layer of a very loose sediment (**1011** in the S and **1012** in the N). A grinding stone was found (AM19-A1-1012-01), animal bones (AM19-A1-1011-01) and a piece of slag (AM19-A1-1011-02), which may indicate a potter's workshop nearby.

Another wall was found in the sounding (**1010**, top 356.86 m, bottom 356.07 m). It is a wide wall (1.50 m wide and 3 m long at least, within the whole width of the sounding) made of very low quality mud-brick (Fig. 6). On top of this wall were six stones almost perfectly aligned, which could not be explained (**1005**, top 356.49 m / 356.54 m). Some animal bones were found in the wall 1010 (AM19-A1-1010-01). This wall was damaged by a modern pit with several layers of plastic (**1002** & **1006**) (Fig. 6). Inside the pit a small fragment of plaster (AM19-A1-1002-01) and animal bones were found (AM19-A1-1002-02). At the end of the excavation, the pit had not been totally emptied. It is at least 1.20 m deep (top 356.94 m, bottom reached 355.68 m).

Associated with the wall 1010 is a very compact layer (**1016**). It is the first layer going under the wall 1004 and the layers associated with it, 1011, 1012 and 1013. Animal bones were found there (AM19-A1-1016-01). A pit full of ash (**1017**) with a piece of slag (AM19-A1-1017-01) was also found N of this layer, under the place where the grinding stone was discovered. The layer 1016 rests on a layer with a heterogeneous and compact consistence, which is most probably a floor (**1020** & **1022** = **1023**, top 356.65 m / 356.67 m). Animal bones were found there (AM19-A1-1020-01) and a piece of slag (AM19-A1-1020-02). A circle of pebbles was also found in the middle of the locus (Fig. 5). There was no ash, but just a brick at the centre of the circle. It lay next to another installation, composed of five bricks next to each other. It appears like a sixth brick was missing. The purpose of these two installations, apparently working together, remains unknown but they probably functioned as floor installations. This layer also contained a piece of flint (AM19-A1-1022-01), two pierced stones (AM19-A1-1023-02) and animal bones (AM19-A1-1022-02, AM19-A1-1023-01).

All the layers and structures mentioned above were located in the W part of the sounding, the wall 1010 creating a sort of separation. To the E of wall 1010 there was a sort of channel (**1014**, top 356.52 m) containing plastic and animal bones (AM19-A1-1014-01). E of this channel was the erosion wash (**1015**). In it was an installation that can be compared to a little modern grave (**1018**, top 356.59), maybe for a little animal (Fig. 6). In its fill (**1021**, top 356.41 m) were some small bones (AM19-A1-1021-01). Some earth was located around, in the hole dug in the wall 1010 (**1019**).

After removing wall 1010, a more or less uniform layer was uncovered (**1024**). The earth in 1024 was very light with little pieces of burned ceramics and maybe of coal (Fig. 7). The same kind of earth was also found in sector A2 and sector A3. There were more animal bones than expected (AM19-A1-1024-01). There was also a piece of slag (AM19-A1-1024-02). Going down, dark joints of what could be lighter bricks (more orange than brown) were found (**1025**), just as in sounding A2. A piece of slag (AM19-

A1-1025-01) and animal bones (AM19-A1-1025-02) were found. The aim was to level the whole sounding to look for other joints and possible bricks but only very compact earth was found, with brick-earth texture, whiter than the rest of the area. This layer could correspond to a levelling of the area.

Interpretations and Conclusions

A first group of layers and structures can be isolated, which are disturbances:

- 1002 and 1006, modern pit filled with plastic and ashes;
- 1014, channel filled with plastic;
- 1001, 1015 and 1019, erosion washes;
- 1005, a group of stones on top of the wall 1010, which could be later;
- 1018 and 1021, the little modern 'grave' in the erosion wash 1019.

Then comes **PHASE A**, linked to the wall 1004:

- 1003b, the first stone pavement with its extension to the N, 1007;
- 1003a, 1009 and 1013, the layers associated to the wall;
- 1008, the second stone pavement found under 1003, with its associated layers 1011 and 1012.

PHASE B is linked to the wall 1010, the second wall excavated in the sounding:

- 1016, a fill layer, and its pit of ash 1017;
- 1020, 1022 and 1023, corresponding to a floor;
- 1024 and 1025, which are very particular layers because of the number of animal bones found there and also the little pieces of coal and burned ceramics, like what has been found in the soundings A2 and A3.

It is quite possible that phase B corresponds to a building that functioned with the wall excavated in the A2 sounding. Future excavations will reveal if this was the case or not. Phase A could be a more recent phase, with two levels represented by the pavements, maybe a squatter occupation considering the poor quality of the wall and the pavement, made with used fragments of *tabuk*.

List of Stratigraphic Units

SU	Description	Items found
1000	Surface layer	
1001	Sub-surface layer, erosion wash	AM19-A1-1001-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A1-1001-02: clay nail AM19-A1-1001-03: slag AM19-A1-1001-04: clay lamp AM19-A1-1001-05: token
1002	First layer of a modern pit	AM19-A1-1002-01: plaster AM19-A1-1002-02: bones (fauna)

1003a	Fill layer above the <i>tabuk</i> pavement	
1003b	<i>Tabuk</i> pavement	
1004	Wall (<i>pise</i> ?), 210 cm long, 50 cm wide	AM19-A1-1004-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A1-1004-02: slag
1005	5 aligned stones on top of wall 1010	
1006	Lower layers of the modern pit	
1007	Two <i>tabuk</i> N of the pavement 1003 and its associated layer	
1008	Second pavement (?) of 8 aligned stones under pavement 1003	AM19-A1-1008-01: bones (fauna)
1009	Layer S of wall 1004	AM19-A1-1009-01: stone tool AM19-A1-1009-02: flint flake
1010	Mud-brick wall, 1.50 m wide, 3 m long	AM19-A1-1010-01: bones (fauna)
1011	Layer S of pavement 1008	AM19-A1-1011-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A1-1011-02: slag
1012	Layer N of pavement 1008	AM19-A1-1012-01: grinding stone
1013	Layer N of wall 1004 with a <i>tabuk</i> assemblage and a fireplace	
1014	Modern channel, E of wall 1010	AM19-A1-1014-01: bones (fauna)
1015	Erosion wash, E of 1014	
1016	Fill layer	AM19-A1-1016-01: bones (fauna)
1017	Pit with ash and a piece of slag in 1016	AM19-A1-1017-01: slag
1018	Modern grave (?) for a little animal (?)	
1019	Earth between 1018 and wall 1010	
1020	Floor (=1022 and 1023)	AM19-A1-1020-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A1-1020-02: slag
1021	Fill of 1018	AM19-A1-1021-01: bones (fauna)
1022	Floor (=1020 and 1023)	AM19-A1-1022-01: stone tool (?) AM19-A1-1022-02: bones (fauna)
1023	Floor (=1020 and 1022)	AM19-A1-1023-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A1-1023-02: 2 pierced stones
1024	Layer under wall 1010, lighter and with little pieces of burned ceramics	AM19-A1-1024-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A1-1024-02: slag

1025	Dark possible joints inside 1024	AM19-A1-1025-01: slag AM19-A1-1025-02: bones (fauna)
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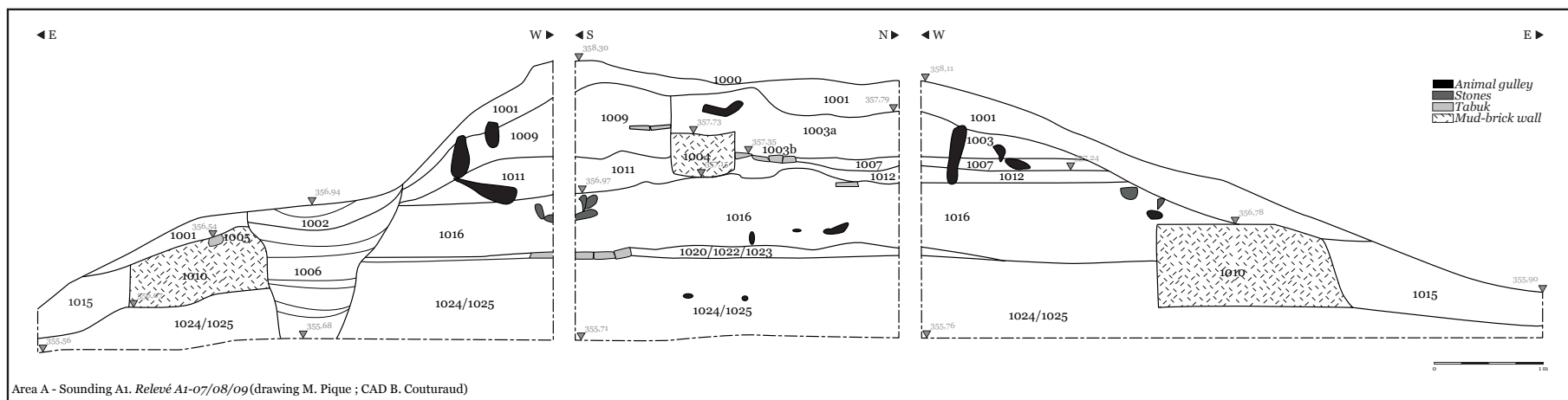


FIG. 1: S, W and N sections of the sounding A1

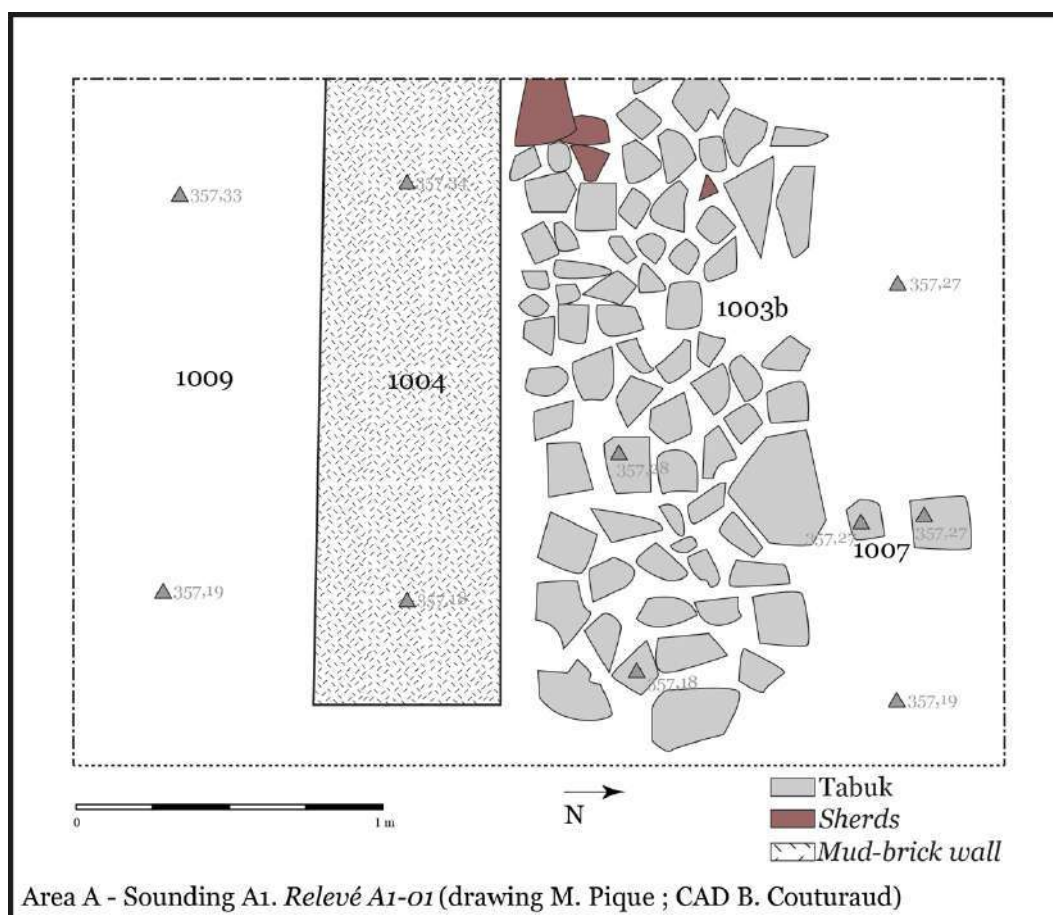


FIG. 2: Pavement floor 1003b



FIG. 3: Pavement 1003b and wall 1004; wall 1010 and pit 1006 can be seen further E

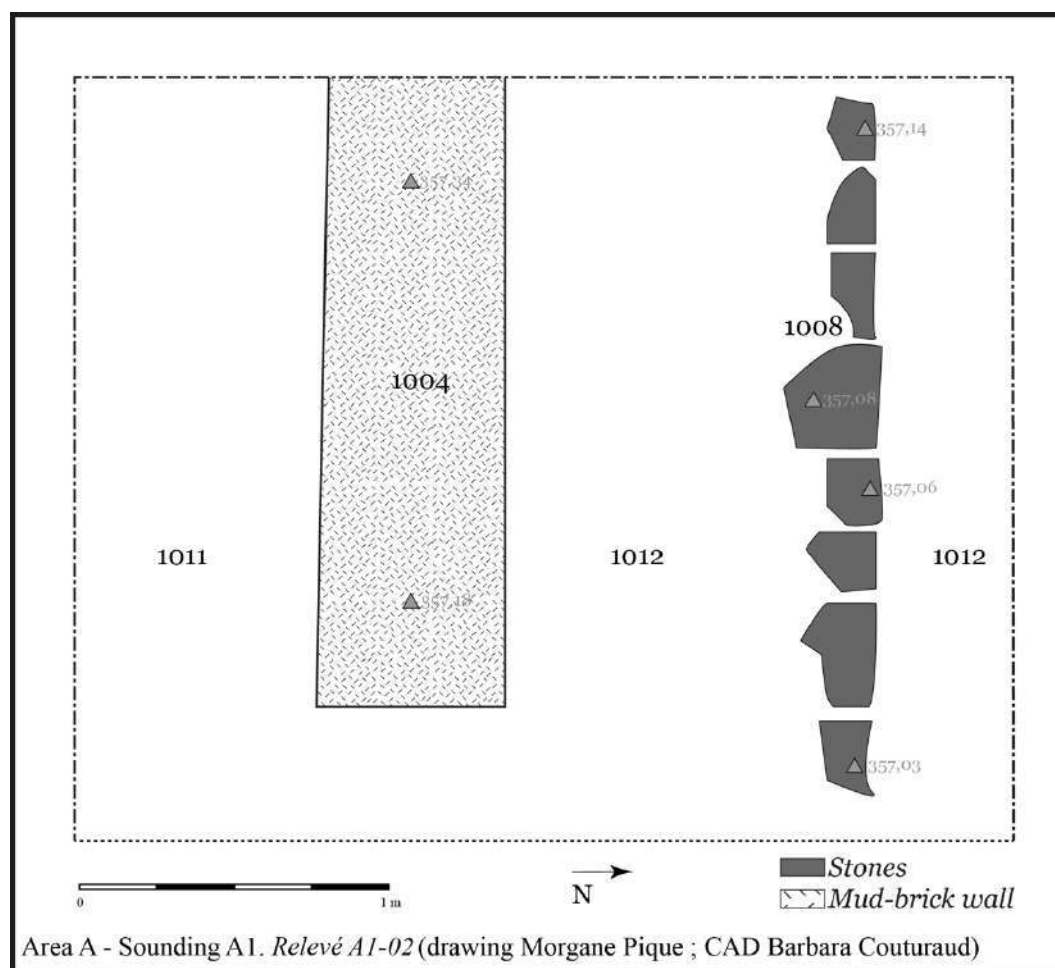


FIG. 4: Alignment of stones 1008



FIG. 5: Floor 1020, with the two installations (circle of pebbles in the S and *tabuk* in the N) and wall 1010 on the left

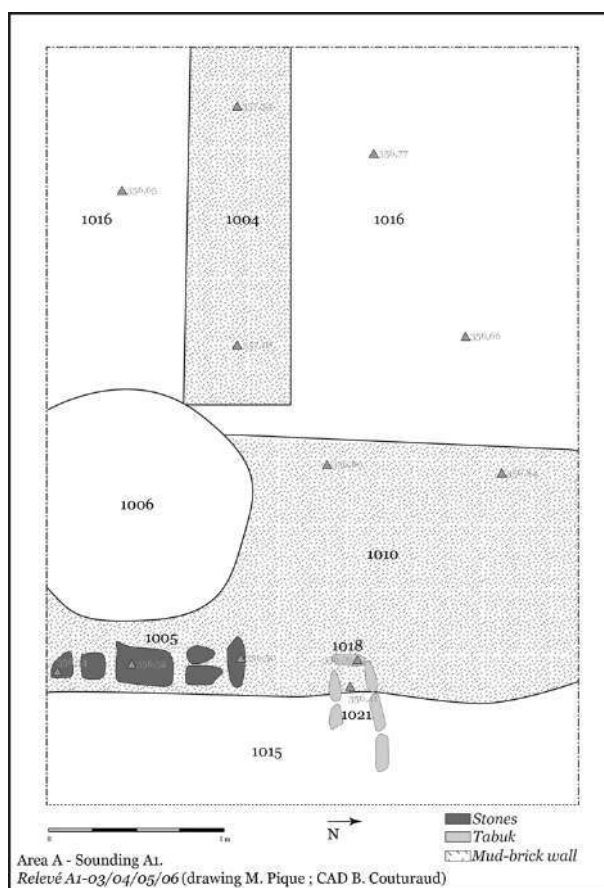


FIG. 6: Walls 1004 and 1010



FIG. 7: Layer 1024 on the last day of the campaign



FIG. 8: Fragment of an unfinished clay lamp (AM19-A1-1001-04)



FIG. 9: Fragment of a clay nail (AM19-A1-1001-02)