



# MISSION ARCHEOLOGIQUE D'AMYAN

## PRELIMINARY REPORT FIRST CAMPAIGN – 2019



Responsible of the project : Barbara Couturaud

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## SOUNDING A2

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### Introduction

The sounding A2 is located in the middle of the step trench, between A1 (on top of the trench) and A3 (at the base of the trench). After setting up the excavation limits on May 21, the excavation began on May 22 and has been completed on June 12.

The sounding A2 is a large rectangle of 10 m long on the slope and 3 m wide. The slope is fairly homogeneous over the entire area and is around 25 degrees. The E baulk, which constitutes the lower limit of the sounding, is at alt. 349.18 m / 349.27 m and the W one is at alt. 353.72 m / 353.75 m.

### Description

Due to the slope, four artificial steps have been set up from the upper part (W) until down to the baulk between A2 and A3 (E) (Fig. 1). Some of these artificial steps have been established based on the discovered remains (Fig. 2).

The establishment of the first upper two artificial steps in the slope, 2 m-wide each, has allowed to identify several layers following the slope corresponding to eroded or washed-out structures on the top, one under the others: first, the surface layer (**1200**), then a layer resulting from the erosion of mud-brick structures (**1201**), a more compact with broken mud-bricks (**1202 & 1205**), a rather compact clay-silty layer (**1203**) in which were eroded mud-bricks (**1204**, alt. 352.35 m). In each of these layers, animal bones (AM19-A2-1201-03; AM19-A2-1202-01; AM19-A2-1203-01), potsherds (no complete form) and slags (AM19-A2-1200-01; AM19-A2-1201-02) were collected (Fig. 4). It has to be noted that some potsherds had concretions. In layer 1201, a fragmentary clay nail was collected (AM19-A2-1201-01, alt. 353.07 m) (Fig. 6). This nail has a slightly rounded circular head and an incomplete body. This object, that could be the remains of a wall peg, discovered in a washout layer on the slope, suggests a religious building at the top of the high mound, which dating is unknown. It must also be mentioned two objects from layer 1203: an iron arrowhead fragment (AM19-A2-1203-03) and two fragments of pottery scrapers (AM19-A2-1201-04 and AM19-A2-1203-04). Only the surface erosion layers (1200-1201) are found throughout the whole area.

A 1 m-wide sounding in the artificial steps 1 and 2 has shown that under the layer 1203, silty clay layers were still deposited along a slope to the E (**1210 & 1211**, alt. inf. 350.51 m). 1210 and 1211 are composed of wet soil with inclusion of carbonaceous elements. The gap between 1210 and 1211 in the sounding is marked by a layer of ashes with some crushed potsherds visible in the W section of the sounding (**1214**, alt. 351.33 m) but it does not continue on the S side of the excavation. Just as layers 1201, 1202 and 1203,

layers 1210 and 1211 are characterized by the presence of potsherds, slags (AM19-A2-1211-01), bones (AM19-A2-1210-01) and one object, a spherical polished stone, maybe a stone sling ball (AM19-A2-1210-02).

The layers 1202, 1203, 1210 and 1211 follow the slope and seem to be stopped by a wall, oriented N-S across the entire width of the area (**1207** and **1206** in the S section, step 3) and discovered during the establishment of the artificial step 3 (Fig. 1). With the setting up of the artificial steps 3 and 4, it was possible to excavate the wall 1207 on all of its width: its E and W limits are very clear (Fig. 1). This wall 1207 rests under the most recent erosion layer 1201 and has stopped the accumulated erosion layers 1203 and 1210 along the slope. Because of the erosion of the slope, the wall is unevenly preserved in elevation, but it was possible to identify its base in the artificial step 4 (first mud-brick layer at alt. 348.33 m) (Fig. 1 & 2). This wall is 3.60 m wide. Its highest altitude has been found in the W edge of the artificial step 3 at alt. 350.95 m (in the S limit of the excavation). It is then preserved on 2.62 m high. It is oriented N-S, slightly off-axis to the E. It has been built with square mud-bricks (36 x 36 x 12 cm) and half-bricks (18 x 36 x 12 cm). The joints between the mud-bricks are very neat and measure about 4 cm. As this wall is located perpendicularly to the slope and preserved according to the slope, it was possible to highlight different parts of courses to better understand the pattern of the bricks. On the W side (step 3), the best-preserved layer of bricks (alt. 350.42 m) consists of half-bricks on the exterior facing of the wall (stretcher bond pattern), followed by a row of square bricks, then a row of half-bricks (alt. 350.42 m). In the N part of artificial step 3, on the wall facing, it has been noted that the upper course consists of square bricks (alt. 350.58 m). On the same step, it was also possible to identify four rows of half-bricks (alt. 350.24 m) below a layer of square bricks. The use of half-brick rows thus creates an alternation of vertical joints in order for the building to be stable. The excavation thus made it possible to partially identify the pattern of the wall (Fig. 3).

Finally, in the artificial step 4b, at the E side of the wall 1207, the excavation allowed to find the lowest layer of bricks, i.e. its foundations. It appears that wall 1207 is intrusive in a compact mass of mud-bricks, less compact than those of wall 1207 (**1209** in the N part, alt. 348.48 m / 348.94 m, and **1213** in the S part, alt. 348.40 m / 348.83 m = **1208**). This mass seems to be composed of bricks of poor quality. Some animal bones were found (AM19-A2-1208-01) and slags (AM19-A2-1208-02).

The partial excavation of the E baulk of the sounding (**1212**) has allowed to link the A2 and A3 soundings. The excavation of the berm did not provide any visible and legible structures; only the same compact mass beneath the wall, the one excavated in the A3 sounding. It has to be noted that animal bones have been found (AM19-A2-1212-02), and a long object, roughly square in section, perhaps the bottom part of a terracotta nail (AM19-A2-1212-01) (Fig. 5).

## Interpretations and Conclusions

Wall 1207 could be an enclosure wall or a rampart that would be based on a *glacis* composed of lower quality mud-bricks (see sounding A3), or it would be more recent and thus intrusive in an older structure rather poorly preserved.

Due to the height of the wall 1207 at its W limit (2.62 m), it is possible that the washout layers 1203, 1210 and 1211 stopped by the wall 1207 cover a floor associated with this rampart 1207 that has not been excavated yet.

## List of Stratigraphic Units

SU	Description	Items found
1200	Surface	AM19-A2-1200-01: slag
1201	Heterogeneous erosion layer of structures on the top	AM19-A2-1201-01: terracotta nail AM19-A2-1201-02: slags AM19-A2-1201-03: bones (fauna) AM19-A2-1201-04: pottery scraper
1202	Compact erosion layer of structures on the top, under 1201, W of wall 1207 and against it. (= 1205 in the artificial step 1)	AM19-A2-1202-01: bones (fauna)
1203	More compact and wet layer, under 1202, W of wall 1207 and against it	AM19-A2-1203-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A2-1203-03: iron arrowhead AM19-A2-1203-04: pottery scraper
1204	Mud-bricks eroded in 1203, visible in the W section	
1205	See 1202	
1206	See 1207	
1207	Wall, 3.60 m wide, at least 3 m long and 2.62 m height (= 1206 in the S section, artificial step 3)	
1208	Compact mass of fallen mud-brick, poor quality, E of wall 1207 (artificial step 4)	AM19-A2-1208-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A2-1208-02: slags
1209	Compact mass of fallen mud-brick, poor quality, E of wall 1207, visible in the N section (artificial step 4)	
1210	Washout layer, wet, under 1203	AM19-A2-1210-01: bones (fauna) AM19-A2-1210-02: spherical stone
1211	Washout layer, wet, under 1210	AM19-A2-1211-01: slag
1212	Erosion layer in the baulk between A2 and A3	AM19-A2-1212-01: terracotta nail AM19-A2-1212-02: bones (fauna)
1213	Compact mass of fallen mud-brick, poor quality, E of wall 1207, visible in the S section (artificial step 4)	
1214	Layer of ashes between 1210 and 1211, only visible in the W section	

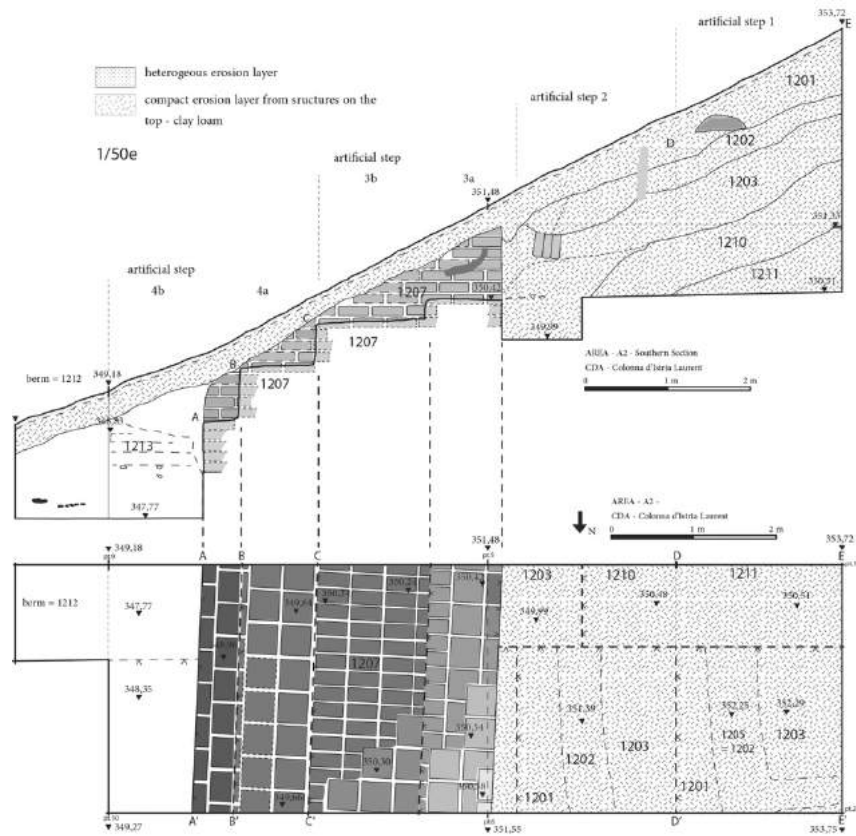


FIG. 1: Drawing of the S section and plan



FIG. 2: Wall 1207, view to SW

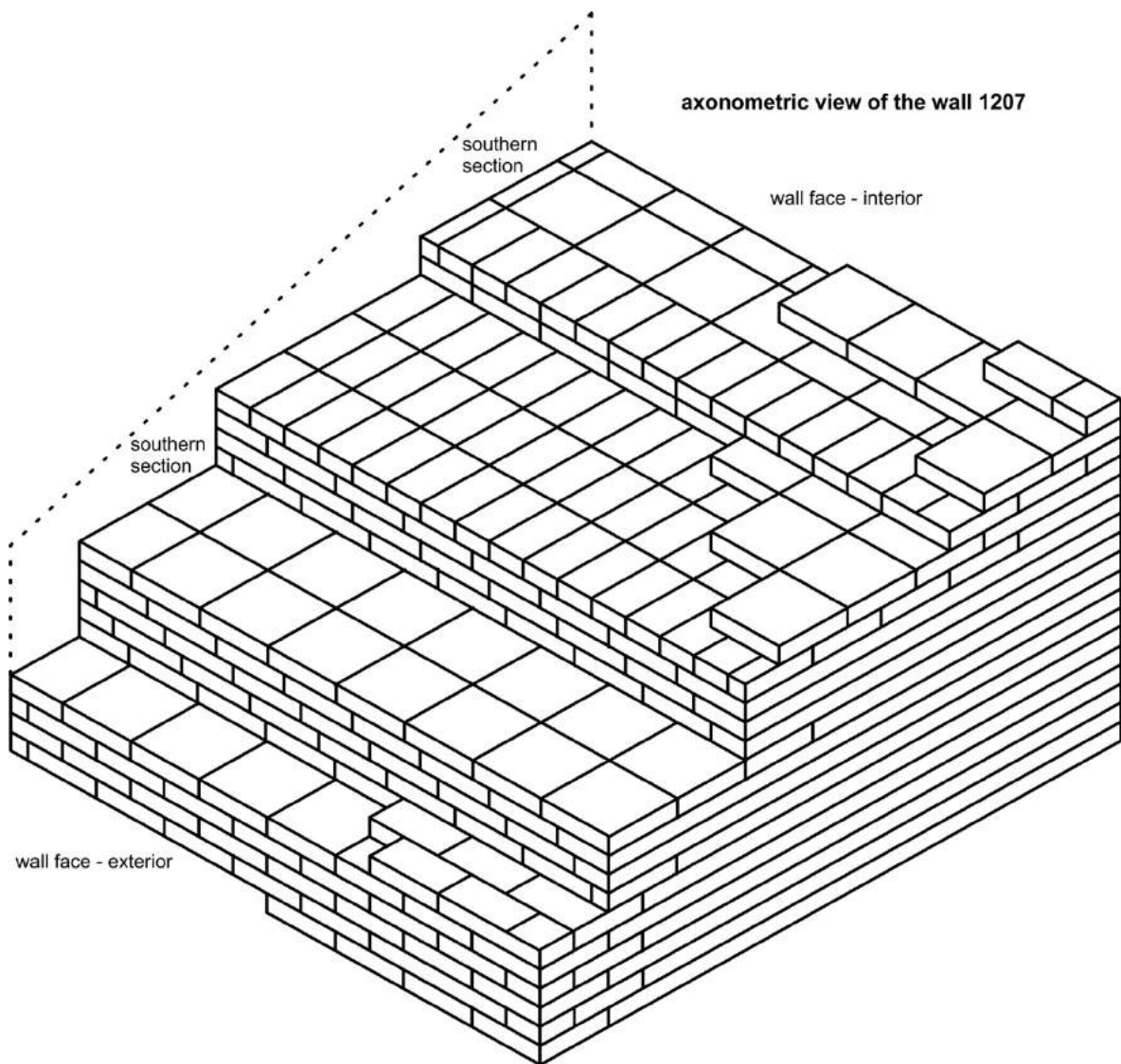


FIG. 3: Provisional axonometric view of wall 1207



FIG. 4: Example of slags (AM19-A2-1201-02)



FIG. 5: Possible bottom part of a terracotta nail (AM19-A2-1212-01)



FIG. 6: Upper part of a terracotta nail (AM19-A2-1201-01)