

## ON SOME PECULIAR TERRACOTTA NAILS FOUND IN AMYAN (KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ)

By BARBARA COUTURAUD

In 2019, three fragments of terracotta nails were discovered at the site of Amyan (Kurdistan region of Iraq, Duhok Governorate), probably dated to the second half of the second millennium B.C. Typologically unprecedented, they nonetheless belong to the well-known category of nails found throughout Mesopotamia and Susiana, dating from the fourth to first millennia B.C. This article publishes the nails from Amyan and also contextualises them by comparing them to other terracotta nails found in northern Mesopotamia and dated to the second half of the second millennium B.C. By doing so, I ultimately propose an initial typology of these objects.

### Introduction

Terracotta nails from Mesopotamia are little understood. Numerous problems arise as soon as one tries to characterize these objects more specifically, beginning with the question of terminology, since they may be defined or labelled as knobs, wall nails, wall pegs or wall cones.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that these different terms may reflect either a form (cone) or a function (nail, peg, knob). However, it should also be noted that the objects denoted by these terms are always associated with a wall. They are commonly attributed a decorative function, which originates in the first forms of earthen architecture, or are associated with a utilitarian function, such as a hanging system for clothes or a door closing system, as well as having a symbolic function as foundation deposits, among others.<sup>2</sup> Here, I use the term ‘terracotta nail’, admitting that ‘nail’ already implies a function, but this term emphasises its shape, as an object composed of a shank and a head.

Terracotta nails are found throughout the ancient Near East, dating from the late fourth until the first millennium B.C. Regarding architectural contexts, it is recognized that they are mainly associated with temples, although they are also found associated with palaces and enclosure walls, as textual mentions from Assur attest. Some examples also link them to doorways.<sup>3</sup>

In 2019, three fragments of terracotta nails were discovered at the site of Amyan, located in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and apparently dated to the second half of the second millennium B.C. This article presents these nails but also contextualises them in a reliable regional and chronological framework by comparing them to other nails found in northern Mesopotamia. In order to sketch out an initial typology, this article concentrates on uninscribed terracotta nails dated to the second half of the second millennium B.C., either from the time of the Mitanni kingdom (c. 1600–1300 B.C.) or the Middle Assyrian period (c. 1300–1000 B.C.).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tourtet 2013: 173.

<sup>2</sup> Tourtet 2013: 183–184.

<sup>3</sup> Tourtet 2013: 176–181.

<sup>4</sup> Although terracotta nails have also been found in southern Mesopotamia, northern Mesopotamia, and Susiana in the late fourth and third millennia B.C., at the sites of Uruk, Kish, Lagash, Tell Brak, Tell Bi’a, Susa and Tchoga Zambil (see Hemker 1993, Tourtet 2013), I prefer to restrict the comparisons. Indeed, an exhaustive study of the entire corpus of nails found in Mesopotamia goes far beyond the scope of this article, the goal of which is to contextualize the nails found in Amyan, dated *a priori* to the second half of the second millennium B.C. Therefore, I only consider nails dated to this period found

in northern Mesopotamia around Amyan (the northern regions of Iraq and Syria), plain and uninscribed, and published with photographs, in order to allow a better comparative study. Thus, I do not include nails dating to the first part of the second millennium B.C., or the appliques set on a wooden core partially embedded in a wall, known in the first millennium B.C. and found at many sites, like those recently found at Girdi Gulak (Colantoni *et al.* 2018) or more famously those from Ashur (Andrae 1935), but also the hollow *zikkatu* from Khorsabad, for example (Loud 1936; Loud and Altman 1938), or the inscribed hollow nail from Tell Taban (Maul 2005), the shape of which is different from the plain nails studied here.



Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Amyan and other sites mentioned in the text (after Sauvage 2020).

### *The Archaeological Site of Amyan*

Amyan is located in the Navkur Plain (Fig. 1), an extremely fertile plain which has been heavily occupied since the Neolithic period.<sup>5</sup> The site of Amyan is composed of a main mound, 26 meters high and measuring 4 hectares, surrounded on its eastern and southern sides by a lower town of around 15 hectares, partly covered by a modern village (Fig. 2). The survey and surface collection carried out on the site by the Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project (hereafter LoNAP) team has evidenced an almost continuous occupation from the Late Chalcolithic to the Islamic period.<sup>6</sup> The most heavily represented periods are the Early Bronze Age and the Middle Bronze Age. On the periphery of the main mound, nine other smaller sites have been identified, occupation of which goes back to the Hassuna period.

During the first season of fieldwork in 2019, a step trench was excavated in order to better understand the high mound and its levels of occupation (Fig. 3).<sup>7</sup> However, the step trench did not reveal a succession of occupation levels but massive structures resulting from urban planning (Fig. 4). First, a wall, probably an enclosure wall if not a rampart, was excavated halfway along the step trench (Wall 1207).<sup>8</sup> This wall was 3.60 metres wide and preserved to a height of 2.60 metres, oriented north-south, slightly off-axis to the east (Fig. 5). It was built of square mud-bricks (36 x 36 x 12 cm) and half-bricks (18 x 36 x 12 cm).<sup>9</sup> This wall rests on a massive structure, either a glacis or a terrace, at the bottom of the trench (1405).<sup>10</sup> Roughly oriented north-south, this lower structure is composed of square bricks (40 x 40 cm), which are characterized by their poor state of preservation and heterogeneity, filled with gravel, small stones and sherds.<sup>11</sup> A small sounding within the core of this structure has shown, on the contrary, that the bricks of the inner part of this mass were more compact and purer. This difference could correspond to different phases of construction, or to differentiated building techniques. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the full width of this structure has not yet been revealed, but within the limits of the sounding, the minimum width excavated is almost 4 metres, and a height of c. 3 metres.

<sup>5</sup> Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Morandi Bonacossi 2020.

<sup>7</sup> For a complete description of the excavations of Amyan, see Couturaud 2020a.

<sup>8</sup> Colonna d'Istria 2020.

<sup>9</sup> At Muqable III, a similar, albeit smaller, wall has been excavated, interpreted as a fortification wall, measuring 2.40 meters wide and dated to the Middle Assyrian period.

The associated buildings are constructed with square bricks (35 x 35 x 10 cm); Puljiz and Qassim 2018: 95.

<sup>10</sup> Couturaud 2020c.

<sup>11</sup> A comparable structure, similar in terms of composition and size, has been excavated in Qasr Shemamok and has been interpreted by its excavators as a ramp leading to the palace of Adad-Nirari I; M. G. Masetti Rouault, personal communication.



Fig. 2. Aerial view of the main mound of Amyan and its lower town covered by the modern village (image courtesy LoNAP).

Slightly above the wall is another building of which only one wall and a part of a possible courtyard were excavated in the upper part of the trench (Fig. 6).<sup>12</sup> The wall, most probably the outer wall of the building, measures 1.50 metres wide, which seems to indicate that the building was probably of some importance and linked with an administrative function. On the floor was a set of square baked bricks, which may correspond either to a remnant of a courtyard pavement largely removed, or to a fireplace installation.<sup>13</sup> The building rests on a levelling layer, which indicates that it is a new foundation. A later phase was also uncovered, but probably belonging to a squatter occupation.

Regarding the dating of these different types of architecture, the ongoing study based on the ceramic assemblage has proved to be more complicated than expected, mainly due to the contexts excavated: monumental architecture and too few floors and closed contexts.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the pottery comes mainly from erosion or fill layers, a situation which largely explains the presence of ceramics dating from different periods in most of the stratigraphic units excavated during this campaign. However, it seems, although final determination must wait for the completion of the study of the material, that the remains can be dated to the second millennium B.C.<sup>15</sup>

#### *The Terracotta Nails Found at Amyan*

Three nails<sup>16</sup> were found at Amyan during the first excavation season in 2019. One is complete and the other two are fragmentary, although it is quite possible that the latter two are fragments of the

<sup>12</sup> Pique *et al.* 2020.

<sup>13</sup> As discovered in a Middle Bronze Age prestige building in Gomel; Morandi Bonacossi *et al.* 2018: 123–125.

<sup>14</sup> Babour 2020.

<sup>15</sup> For the dating of the excavated area, see Couturaud and Mouamar *forthcoming*; for an historical overview of the region of Amyan, see Couturaud 2021. This dating is provisional since the ceramic study is not complete.

<sup>16</sup> We should mention here that a fourth object was initially interpreted as a fragment of a nail and published as such in the preliminary report: Couturaud 2020b: 74, no. AM19-A1-1001-02. It seems that it is in fact a terracotta jar stopper, given that a more careful study of the object in 2021 revealed that it was not the upper fragment of an object, but a fully conserved artefact, of a maximum height of 4.7 cm only; see Othman 2021: 12.





Fig. 3. View of the step trench at the end of the excavation (MAA).

same nail. Unfortunately, these fragments were not found in well-defined closed contexts. Nevertheless, ongoing research seems to point to the excavated contexts most probably dating from the second half of the second millennium B.C., from the period associated with the Mitanni kingdom (c. 1600–1300 B.C.) or the Middle Assyrian period (c. 1300–1000 B.C.).<sup>17</sup>

The first nail, found complete and registered as AM19-A2-1201-01 (Fig. 7A), is 12.7 cm long. The shank is round, with a diameter of 4.6 cm, and it was shaped by hand; the traces of fingers from a closed hand are still visible. The end of the shank is flat. The head of the nail is round and slightly convex, with a diameter of 7.6 cm and a thickness of 1.2 cm. The nail is pinkish-beige in colour.

<sup>17</sup> Couturaud and Mouamar [forthcoming](#).

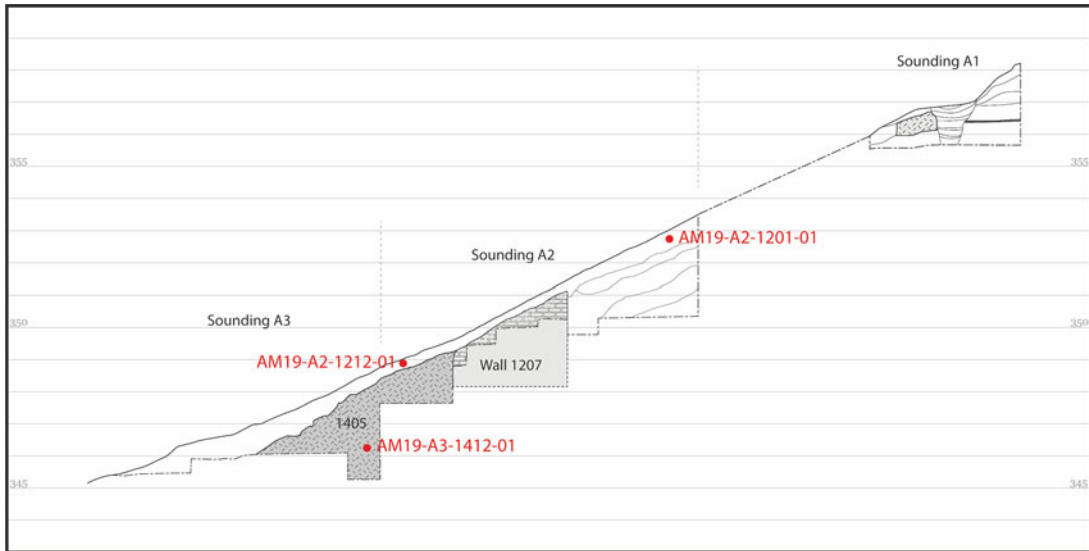


Fig. 4. Section of the excavation of the step trench at Amyan and location of the nails (MAA).



Fig. 5. Wall 1207 in sounding A2 (MAA).

This nail was found in sounding A2, located in the central part of the step trench, where remains of the big wall, Wall 1207, were excavated (Fig. 4).<sup>18</sup> As mentioned previously, this wall is most probably an enclosure wall, perhaps to enclose a specific district of the town, or it may be a fortification wall. The occupation surface associated with the wall has unfortunately not been discovered, but on its

<sup>18</sup> Colonna d'Istria 2020.





Fig. 6. The courtyard of the building excavated in sounding A1 (MAA).

inner side, many erosion layers were excavated, sloping in the same direction as the slope of the mound. All these layers contained many pottery sherds, stones and animal bones. The nail was found in layer 1201, the upper erosion layer that runs across the whole sounding. Other objects found in this layer include a clay scraper and pieces of terracotta slag,<sup>19</sup> along with animal bones. Obviously, the main problem regarding the discovery context of the nail is that it is not clear whether it belongs to the sounding in which it was found, or if it originally came from the upper area of the mound and slipped down through erosion.

The second fragment, registered as AM19-A2-1212-01 (Fig. 7B), was also found in sounding A2, in the same layer 1201 described above, but located in the unexcavated section between soundings A2 and A3, referred to as layer 1212 at this location of the sounding (Fig. 4). Here again, we have little information about the original context of this nail, only the lower part of which is preserved. The section is rectangular, measuring approximately 3 cm × 4 cm, with a length of 8.4 cm. This lower part tapers slightly, ending in a flat bottom. The colour of this fragment is slightly more orange than the previous nail, but the consistency of the clay is the same, very dense, with a fine granulometry. It is decorated with four parallel, horizontal incisions.

It is very likely that this fragment is the lower part of, or at least from the same type of nail, as the third nail fragment found at Amyan in sounding A3 and recorded as AM19-A3-1412-01 (Fig. 7C).<sup>20</sup> This nail, 8.3 cm long and of the same colour as the previous nail described above, is almost perfectly square in cross-section, measuring 4.2 cm × 4.1 cm. This slight offset between the sides, added to the fact that, in the same way as the previous nail, it tapers slightly towards the bottom, suggests that it could belong to the same type of nail – if not the same object – the shank of which begins with a square section and ends with a rectangular section, demonstrating great crafting ability. The head of this nail is flat and square, and the edges flare slightly outwards, to a height of 0.8 cm.

<sup>19</sup> Couturaud 2020b, no. AM19-A2-1201-04 and AM19-A2-1201-02.

<sup>20</sup> Couturaud 2020c.

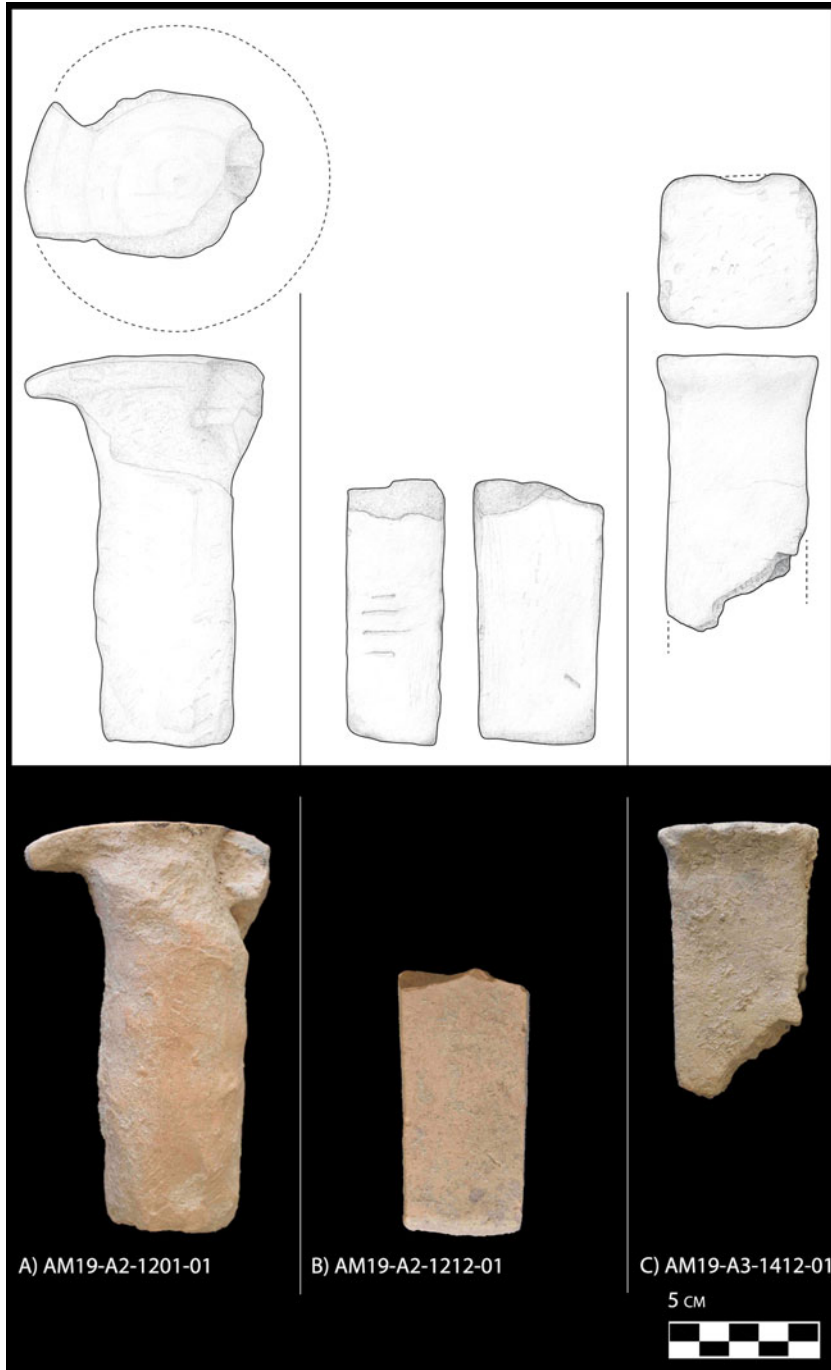


Fig. 7. Terracotta nails found at Amyan: A: AM19-A2-1201-01; B: AM19-A2-1212-01; C: AM19-A3-1412-01 (MAA).

The archaeological layer in which this last nail was recovered is numbered 1412 (Fig. 4). It is one of the layers constituting the imposing structure, numbered 1405, on which the enclosure wall rests. The connection between the wall excavated in sounding A2 and this massive structure remains unclear, but the difference in the methods of construction is obvious. Indeed, while the bricks of the wall are of good quality and well-shaped, the bricks of the glaci/terrace are characterized by their poor

state of preservation, their friability, and their heterogeneity, as mentioned above. The nail was found in layer 1412, in which we could not trace the bricks: it was perhaps a layer of packed earth, or bricks whose joints were not recognizable. It should be noted that although the last two fragments were recovered roughly in the same area, there was a difference of approximately 2.5 m in elevation between them.

#### *Some Other Terracotta Nails: Description and Contexts*

The nails of Amyan are not the first nails to be discovered, although their shape makes them typologically unprecedented. Since the reopening of excavations in the Kurdistan region of Iraq in the 2010s, a few new discoveries of nails have been made. The best contextualized ones are certainly those found in the Mitanni palace of Kemune (Kemune 1, Fig. 8A), located today on the shores of the artificial lake of Mosul and partially submerged depending on the season and the year. Spotted in 2013 by a team from the Directorate of Antiquities, it was excavated in 2018 by a Kurdish-German team thanks to a drop in the water level.<sup>21</sup> The excavated part of this palace covers 900 m<sup>2</sup>. Twenty rooms were excavated, and the nails were found in rooms A and B, in the northwestern part of the building, against the western wall. Room A revealed no openings. In phase 4b, a level that, according to the excavators, followed destruction perhaps caused by an earthquake, two upper fragments of nails were found, along with a fragment of a tablet and a silver ring. Both fragments are made of terracotta, with a round, protruding head and a shank with a circular cross-section; the ends, flat or pointed, are not present.<sup>22</sup> The dimensions of the nails are not specified, but the photograph that shows three fragmentary examples indicates that the best-preserved example must measure a little less than 10 cm in length. In Room B, nails of the same type were also found in phase 4b, parts of a rich inventory including pottery, a silver ring, seven tablet fragments, six seal impressions, beads and stone tools.<sup>23</sup> The texts on the tablets mention goods, rations and activities related to metal crafts.<sup>24</sup> In short, everything points to an administrative context related to the Kemune nails.

Another nail was found at Kemune on the surface of the site during the work directed by the Directorate of Antiquities; it is now kept in the National Museum in Duhok (Kemune 2, Fig. 8B).<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, there is no detailed description of its context of discovery. This specimen is complete, 14.1 cm long; the shank is cylindrical with a diameter of 3 cm ending in a point. The head is round, with a diameter of 4.5 cm and very slightly convex, unlike the previous specimens with a clearly protruding head. It was also modelled by hand, in a fine clay. Its colour is pink-orange.

Two nail shanks were also found during surveys conducted by the Upper Greater Zab Archaeological Reconnaissance project<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 8C). One is the lower part of a nail and the other most certainly a middle part. The heads are not preserved. Interpreted by the excavators as cones or the feet of dishes, we see here the same prototype of nails as at Kemune, the shanks of which, of circular section, are moulded by hand, as attested by the visible finger marks. The lower part, which ends in a point, is 9.5 cm long, and between 1.5 cm and 2.9 cm in diameter. The middle part is 9.1 cm long and has a diameter of 3.1 cm. These two specimens were found on the surface of the site of Grd-ī Āṣ-ī Geüre, which consists of a high mound and a lower town on the banks of the Kurabak River, 15 km east of Amyan.<sup>27</sup> The site was occupied discontinuously from the mid-third millennium B.C. to the Early Islamic period. The most intense periods of occupation were during the first half of the second millennium B.C., the Seleucid period and the Early Islamic period.

At the other end of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the excavations at the site of Bakr Awa have provided a specimen dated by the excavators to the Late Bronze Age, found in a layer on the edge of the high mound, but without a precise context, during the excavation of Area 1 (Fig. 8D).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Puljiz and Qassim 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Puljiz and Qassim 2019: 20, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Puljiz and Qassim 2019: 23.

<sup>24</sup> Puljiz and Qassim 2019: 33–34.

<sup>25</sup> Recorded under the number 298. Information provided here come from the archives of the Duhok Museum, and I am very grateful to Dr Bekas Hassan for allowing me access.

<sup>26</sup> Koliński 2020: 248, number B4 and B5.

<sup>27</sup> Koliński 2020: 246–270, site US 055.

<sup>28</sup> Miglus *et al.* 2013: 51, no. BA1150/1.



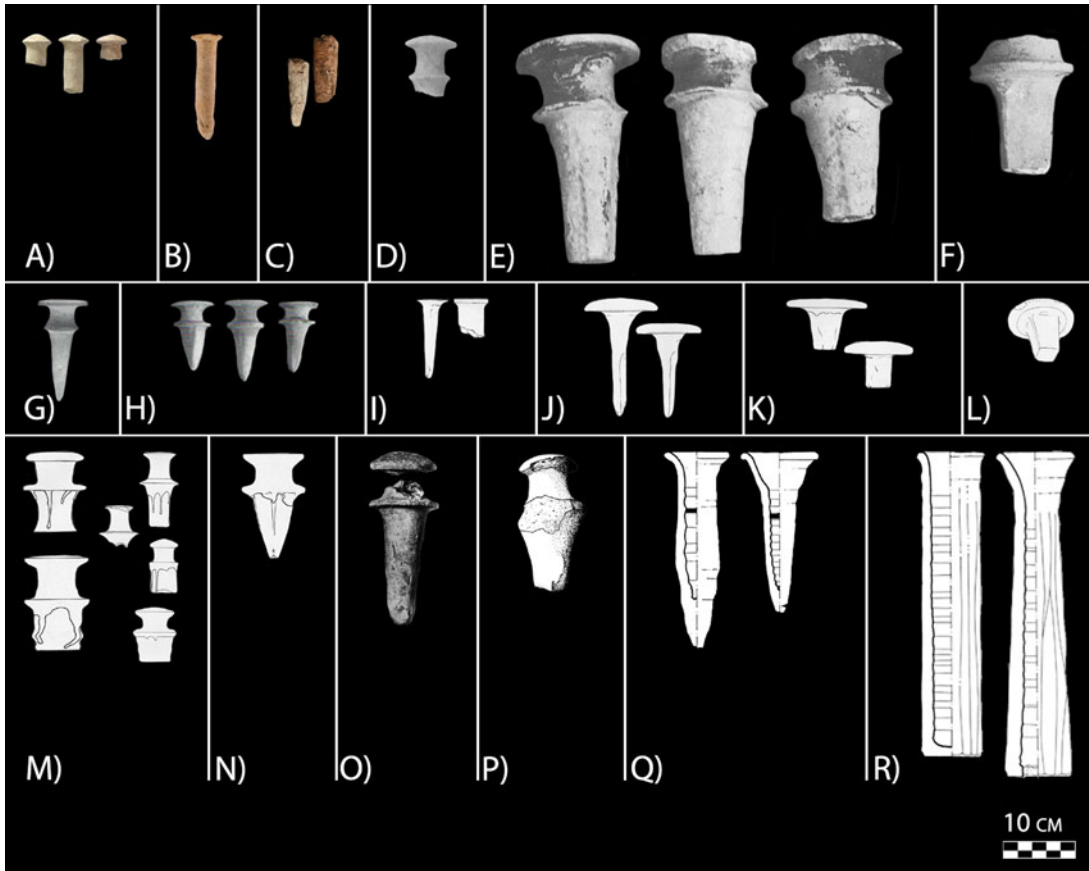


Fig. 8. A, B: Terracotta nails found in Kemune (after Puljiz and Qassim 2019; Duhok National Museum archives); C: Grd-ī Āṣ-ī Geūre (Koliński 2020); D: Bakr Awa (Miglus *et al.* 2013); E–H: Tell ar-Rimah (Carter 1964; Postgate *et al.* 1997); I–N: Nuzi (Starr 1937); O: Fakhariyah (McEwan *et al.* 1958); P: Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (Eickhoff 1985); Q, R: Emar (Margueron 1982). All nails are scaled except those of Nuzi and Fakhariyah.

This fragment is larger than the others, approximately 10 cm long, and is decorated with a round, protruding head that dominates a shank of circular section, unfortunately broken under a small flange, very similar to the examples found at Tell ar-Rimah, Fakhariyah and some examples at Nuzi (see below).

Outside the present-day Kurdistan region of Iraq, several examples of nails were found in earlier excavations. At Tell ar-Rimah in the Sinjar region of Iraq, nails were found in the rubble of a level dating to the Mitanni period,<sup>29</sup> or in the levelled fill preceding the building,<sup>30</sup> and at least one nail belonged to the following period, the Middle Assyrian period.<sup>31</sup> About a dozen fragments were found, only partially published, but at least four types may be distinguished, according to their size and shank shape (Rimah 1–4, Figs. 8E–H).<sup>32</sup> The nails measure between 15 and 30 cm, they all have a flange, and the head is always round and slightly convex. The shank end is either flat or pointed, and they are mostly of circular section, but some photos seem to indicate that in some cases the section of the shank could be quadrangular (Rimah 2 and 4, Figs. 8F and H). The specimens with circular sections and flat shank ends are partially covered with bitumen, an interesting piece of information that is not mentioned for the other finds (Rimah 1, Fig. 8E).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Carter 1964: 39.

<sup>30</sup> Postgate *et al.* 1997: 37.

<sup>31</sup> Postgate *et al.* 1997: pl. 25d.

<sup>32</sup> Carter 1964: 40; Postgate *et al.* 1997: pl. 25d–e.

<sup>33</sup> Carter 1964: 40.

At Nuzi, near Kirkuk, many nails were found,<sup>34</sup> fourteen of which are drawn in the publication catalogue – unfortunately without dimensions – that I have divided into six types (Nuzi 1–6, Figs. 8I–N).<sup>35</sup> All have round heads and date from the second half of the second millennium B.C. One group has no flange and includes the nails found in a residence. Of this group, two types (Nuzi 1 and 2, Figs. 8I and J) have a long shank with a circular section – hand-moulded in one case; the end is pointed and has either a flat or slightly protruding round head. The other two types of this first group (Nuzi 3 and 4, Figs. 8K and L) are characterized by a very short shank that is flat at the end, with a square or circular section, and a convex or very slightly protruding round head. This first group of nails is made of a yellowish clay. They were found in different rooms of a residence (room L20 stratum II, and rooms L21 and H60, stratum III). According to the excavators, they were used to decorate the walls. A second group of nails is characterized by a flange (Nuzi 5 and 6, Figs. 8M and N). The most numerous nails have a circular shank with a flat end, topped by a round convex or slightly protruding head (Nuzi 5, Fig. 8M). The other type is characterized by a flat and round head, and a quadrangular section with a pointed end (Nuzi 6, Fig. 8N). Some of the heads of this type are covered with a blue-green glaze. All these flanged specimens were found in temple A, some of them were *in situ*, stuck in the walls, 1.78 m above the ground.<sup>36</sup> Since all the nails are different one from another, the excavators put forward the hypothesis that they were votive gifts, affixed in the walls of the temples.

Another type of flanged nail is attested at Fakhariyah in the Khabur region of northeast Syria (Fig. 8O).<sup>37</sup> The two published fragments, which could belong to the same nail, were found on the floor of the building excavated in Sounding VI, dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This is possibly a temple in view of the objects found there, among which were figurines, rosettes and numerous beads which, according to the excavators, could have been used as garlands hung on the nails.<sup>38</sup> One of the fragments consists only of the upper part of the head, which is round and protruding, while the other fragment is the shank, beginning under the flange. It is clear that the shank, which has a circular section and ends in a point, but without reported dimensions, was moulded by hand.

At the site of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, near Ashur on the Tigris river, fragments of nails were found near the façade of the Middle Assyrian palace.<sup>39</sup> The best-preserved and most interesting example measures 19 cm (Fig. 8P).<sup>40</sup> It is a flanged nail with a circular section whose shank has a flat end. The head is round and protruding.

Finally, moving away from Amyan, it is worth mentioning a batch of several dozen fragments dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C., found in the temple M2 at Emar, on the Middle Euphrates in Syria.<sup>41</sup> These nails, which are hollow, unlike the other examples we have listed, were found in front of the temple façade and are of two types (Emar 1 and 2, Figs. 8Q and R). The first type, between 20 and 30 cm long, has a shank with a circular section that ends in a point, with a round, flat head (Emar 1, Fig. 8Q). The second type is about 50 cm long, has the same kind of round and flat head, but the shank, also of circular section, is straight and has a flat end (Emar 2, Fig. 8R). According to the excavators, these nails would have decorated the walls of the temple.

#### *Towards a Better Definition of Terracotta Nails*

From the study of the terracotta nails found at these nine sites, all dating to the second half of the second millennium B.C. and all in northern Mesopotamia, an initial typology of these objects can be presented. This consists of 21 types based on site, date, archaeological context, length, shank and head (Table 1). It must be noted that though they all date to the second half of the second millennium B.C, it is generally difficult to attribute them to a more specific period, except for those from the palace of Kemune, which belongs to the Mitanni period (Kemune 1, Fig. 8A), and those from Fakhariyah, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta and Emar (Figs. 8O–R), which belong to the Middle

<sup>34</sup> The exact number of nails found is not given, only that they were “found in quantities”; Starr 1937: 59.

<sup>35</sup> Starr 1937: pls. 97–98.

<sup>36</sup> Starr 1937: 59, 94–95, 137–138, 149–152, 407–409.

<sup>37</sup> McEwan *et al.* 1958: 4–6, 42–43, Pl. 43:1–2, no. F151 and F601.

<sup>38</sup> McEwan *et al.* 1958: 42–45.

<sup>39</sup> Eickhoff 1985.

<sup>40</sup> Eickhoff 1985: 91, pl. 4.2, no. T352a.

<sup>41</sup> Margueron 1982: 32–34.

TABLE 1. Typology of nails, based on site, date, archaeological context, length, shank and head.

<i>Site and Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>State and max. length</i>	<i>Shank</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<b>Amyan 1</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Surface next to enclosure wall	Complete 12.7 cm	Section round Flat end	Round Convex	Shank moulded by hand
<b>Amyan 2</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Surface next to enclosure wall	Fragment 8.4 cm	Section quadrangular Flat end	?	4 parallel horizontal incisions on shank
<b>Amyan 3</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	In a glacis/ terrace	Fragment 8.3 cm	Section square End?	Square Flat	-
<b>Kemune 1</b>	Mitanni	Palace	Fragment < 10 cm	Section round End?	Round Protruding	-
<b>Kemune 2</b>	?	?	Complete 14.1 cm	Section round Pointy end	Round Convex	Shank moulded by hand
<b>Grd-ī Āṣ-ī Geüre</b>	?	Surface	Fragment c. 9.5 cm	Section round Pointy end	?	Shank moulded by hand
<b>Bakr Awa</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Slope of the high mound	Fragment c. 10 cm	Section round End?	Round Protruding	Flange between shank and head
<b>Rimah 1</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Palace	Complete c. 30 cm	Section round Flat end	Round Convex	Traces of bitumen. Flange between shank and head
<b>Rimah 2</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Palace	Fragment c. 20 cm	Section square (?) Flat end	Round Convex	Flange between shank and head
<b>Rimah 3</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Palace	Complete c. 15 cm	Section round Pointy end	Round Convex	Flange between shank and head
<b>Rimah 4</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Palace	Complete c. 10 cm	Section quadrangular (?) Pointy end	Round Convex	Flange between shank and head
<b>Nuzi 1</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Residence	?	Section round Pointy end	Round Flat	Shank moulded by hand
<b>Nuzi 2</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Residence	?	Section round Pointy end	Round Protruding	-
<b>Nuzi 3</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Residence	?	Section round Flat end	Round Convex/ Protruding	-
<b>Nuzi 4</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Residence	?	Section square Flat end	Round	-
<b>Nuzi 5</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Palace	?	Section round Flat end	Round Convex/ Protruding	Flange between shank and head. Part covered with glaze
<b>Nuzi 6</b>	Mitanni or M. Assyrian	Palace	?	Section quadrangular Pointy end	Round Flat	Flange between shank and head. Covered with glaze
<b>Fakhariyah</b>	M. Assyrian 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Temple?	?	Section round Pointy end	Round Protruding	Flange between shank and head. Shank moulded by hand
<b>Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta</b>	M. Assyrian	Palace	Complete 19 cm	Section round Flat end	Round Protruding	Flange between shank and head

*Continued*



TABLE 1. (Continued)

<i>Site and Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>State and max. length</i>	<i>Shank</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<b>Emar 1</b>	M. Assyrian 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Temple	Complete c. 30 cm	Section round Pointy end	Round Flat	Hollow
<b>Emar 2</b>	M? Assyrian 13 <sup>th</sup> century	Temple	Complete c. 50 cm	Section round Flat end	Round Flat	Hollow

Assyrian Period, around the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. These datings, of course, are based on the dates of the archaeological contexts in which the objects were found and cannot firmly attest the date of production of the objects, given the possibility that they could have been reused over time.

Regarding the archaeological contexts, when data are known, the nails come from prestige buildings linked to the elite of the cities, associated in one way or another with royal or religious status and administrative function: palaces, temples, or elite residences. The nails of Amyan are the only ones found next to an enclosure wall, be it the fortification wall of the city or a district enclosure. However, the excavation in this area is still in progress and it is possible that further investigation will show the presence of an elite building close to the wall.

The lengths vary a great deal, but this dimension is not very reliable since most of the objects are incomplete. The longest examples are those from Emar, up to 50 cm, but it must be noted that these are also unique, since the shape is known only from this site (Emar 2, Fig. 8R). The smallest complete example comes from Tell ar-Rimah and measures 10 cm (Rimah 4, Fig. 8H). However, the average length of complete examples – when the length is published – is around 20–25 cm. In this regard, the complete nail from Amyan (Amyan 1, Fig. 7A), at 12.7 cm, can be considered as rather small.

Regarding the shapes of the nails, most of them have a shank which is round in section. Two examples from Nuzi are quadrangular (Nuzi 4 and 6, Figs. 8L and N), as well as two examples from Tell ar-Rimah that could be quadrangular according to the photographs, although this is not confirmed in the publication (Rimah 2 and 4, Figs. 8F and H). Given this tendency, the quadrangular nails from Amyan are an exception in this typology (Amyan 2 and 3, Fig. 7B and C). The ends of the shanks can be either flat or pointed. No preference can be seen in the examples listed in this study, though it seems that the thinnest shanks end with a point, which makes sense if they were pegged into a wall; a pointed end obviously helps to insert the nail in a wall without weakening the shank.

All heads are round, except for the quadrangular nail from Amyan (Amyan 3, Fig. 7C). Interestingly, the two nails with a quadrangular shank from Nuzi have round heads (Nuzi 4 and 6, Figs. 8L and N), which shows that the shape of the shank does not determine the shape of the head. In most cases, the head is either slightly protruding or convex. In fewer cases it is flat. In the present state of the documentation listed in this study, it was not possible to determine how the link between the shape of the shank and the shape of the head is made. In other words, it does not seem to me that there was any systematization regarding the type of shank and head of the nail.

Except for the round nail from Amyan (Amyan 1, Fig. 7A), which is quite thick, it is notable that all nails that were moulded by hand are thin and present a pointed end (Kemune 2, Grd-ī Āṣ-ī Geüre, Nuzi 1 and Fakhariyah; Figs. 8B, C, I and O). Almost half of the twenty-one types listed above present a flange between the head and the shank (Bakr Awa, Rimah 1-4, Nuzi 5-6, Fakhariyah and Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta; Figs. 8D, E-H, M-N, O and P). Interestingly, it seems that this type is mainly located in the southeastern fringe of the area under study, although it cannot be too firmly stated that there is a direct connection between the shape and the geographical area. Some of the nails from Rimah are covered with bitumen (Rimah 1, Fig. 8E), and some from Nuzi are covered with glaze (Nuzi 5 and 6, Figs. 8M and N). The quadrangular nail from Amyan is the only one that bears incisions on the shank (Amyan 2, Fig. 7B).

This list of nails does not help in determining the function of these objects but shows that the variation in the typology is not very wide. Indeed, although belonging to a category of artefacts well-known throughout Mesopotamia, the specimens from upper Mesopotamia present specific characteristics, such as the flange, for instance. In any case, the three types at Amyan clearly show their originality in this corpus, regarding their shape, size or the incisions on one of them, and it is to be hoped that further archaeological investigations will help shed more light on these objects.

### *Bibliography*

- Andrae, W. 1935. *Die Jüngerer Ishtar-Tempel in Assur*. Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.
- Babour, T. 2020. "The Pottery". In B. Couturaud, ed. *Archaeological Expedition in Amyan. Report of the First Campaign (2019)*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities: 66–73. [online] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02610503/document>
- Carter, T. H. 1964. "Early Assyrians in the Sinjar". *Expedition* 7: 34–42.
- Colantoni, C., M. Makinson and T. Skuldbøl. 2018. "The Assyrian Eastern Frontier, Girdi Gulak, a Fortified Settlement in the Zagros Foothills. Preliminary Results of the Danish Archaeological Expedition to Iraq". *Ash-Sharq* 2: 13–23.
- Colonna d'Istria, L. 2020. "Sounding A2". In B. Couturaud, ed. *Archaeological Expedition in Amyan. Report of the First Campaign (2019)*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities: 47–56. [online] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02610503/document>
- Couturaud, B., ed. 2020a. *Archaeological Expedition in Amyan. Report of the First Campaign (2019)*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities. [online] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02610503/document>
- 2020b. "The Artefacts". In B. Couturaud, ed. *Archaeological Expedition in Amyan. Report of the First Campaign (2019)*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities: 74–83. [online] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02610503/document>
- 2020c. "Sounding A3". In B. Couturaud, ed. *Archaeological Expedition in Amyan. Report of the First Campaign (2019)*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities: 57–65. [online] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02610503/document>
- 2021. "La Mésopotamie du nord et le pays de Ninive : nouvelles recherches à Amyan". *Syria* 98: 265–288. [online] <https://journals.openedition.org/syria/11284>
- Couturaud, B. and G. Mouamar. Forthcoming. "Ceramic Production of the Late Bronze Age: A New Look from Amyan".
- Eickhoff, T. 1985. *Kar Tukulti-Ninurta, eine mittelassyrische Kult- und Residenzstadt*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag.
- Hemker, C. 1993. "Wandnägel im Alten Orient". *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 125: 113–131.
- Koliński, R. 2020. *Catalogue of Archaeological Sites. Navkūr Plain. Kārbk Stream Basin*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag.
- Loud, G. 1936. *Khorsabad, Part 1: Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Loud, G. and C. Altman. 1938. *Khorsabad, Part 2: The Citadel and the Town*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Margueron, J.-C. 1982. "Architecture et urbanisme". In D. Beyer, ed. *Meskéné-Emar. Dix ans de travaux 1972–1982*. Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations, pp. 23–39.
- Maul, S. M. 2005. *Die Inschriften von Tall Ṭābān (Grabungskampagnen 1997–1999): Die Könige von Aābētu und das Land Māri in mittelassyrischer Zeit*. Tokyo: The Institute for Cultural Studies, Kokushikan University.
- McEwan, C. W., L. S. Braidwood, H. Frankfort, H. G. Güterbock, R. C. Haines, H. J. Kantor, and C. H. Kraeling. 1958. *Soundings at Tell Fakhariyah*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Miglus, P. A., U. Bürger, R. A. Fetner, S. Mühl and A. Sollee. 2013. "Excavation at Bakr Awa 2010 and 2011". *Iraq* 75: 43–88.
- Morandi Bonacossi, D. 2020. "The Amyan Archaeological Complex Survey by the Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project". In B. Couturaud, ed. *Archaeological Expedition in Amyan. Report of the First Campaign (2019)*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities: 14–26. [online] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02610503/document>
- Morandi Bonacossi, D. and M. Iamoni. 2020. "Landscape and Settlement in the Eastern Upper Iraqi Tigris and Navkur Plains: The Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project, Seasons 2012–2013". *Iraq* 77: 9–39.
- Morandi Bonacossi, D., H. Qassim, C. Coppini, K. Gavagnin, E. Giroto, M. Iamoni and C. Tonghini. 2018. "The Italian-Kurdish Excavations at Gir-e Gomel in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Preliminary Report on the 2017 and 2018 Field Seasons". *Mesopotamia* 53: 67–162.

- Othman, A. 2021. "Drawings Of Archaeological Objects". In B. Couturaud, ed. *Mission archéologique d'Amyan. Preliminary Report, Study Campaign-2021*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities: 12–13.
- Pique, M., N. Ali Amin and O. Sharef. 2020. "Sounding A1". In B. Couturaud, ed. *Archaeological Expedition in Amyan. Report of the First Campaign (2019)*. Erbil: General Directorate of Antiquities: 36–46. [online] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02610503/document>
- Postgate, C., D. Oates and J. Oates. 1997. *The Excavations at Tell Al Rimah: The Pottery*. Warminster: British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
- Puljiz, I. and H. Qassim. 2018. "Exploring the Middle Assyrian Countryside in the Middle Tigris Region. The 2017 Season of Excavations at Muqable III". *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 11: 88–109.
- Puljiz, I., and H. Qassim. 2019. "A New Mitanni Center on the Middle Tigris (Kurdistan Region). Report on the 2018 Excavations at Kemune". *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 12: 10–43.
- Starr, R. F. S. 1937–39. *Nuzi. Report on the Excavations at Yorgan Tapa near Kirkuk, Iraq, Conducted by Harvard University in Conjunction with the American School of Oriental Research and the University Museum of Philadelphia 1927–1931*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Tourtet, F. 2013. "Distribution, Materials and Functions of the 'Wall Knobs' in the Near Eastern Late Bronze Age: From South-Western Iran to the Middle Euphrates". In K. De Graef and J. Tavernier, eds. *Susa and Elam. Archaeological, Philological, Historical and Geographical Perspectives. Proceedings of the International Congress Held at Ghent University, December 14–17, 2009*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 173–90.

Barbara Couturaud  
Musée du Louvre  
Paris, France  
[barbara.couturaud@louvre.fr](mailto:barbara.couturaud@louvre.fr)

معلومات عن بعض مسامير التراكوتا الغربية التي تم العثور عليها في أميان (منطقة كردستان في العراق)  
بقلم: باربارا كوتورود - المعهد الفرنسي للشرق الأدنى

في عام 2019 ، تم اكتشاف ثلاث شظايا من مسامير من الطين في موقع أميان (كردستان العراق ، محافظة دهوك) ، ربما يعود تاريخها إلى النصف الثاني من الألفية الثانية قبل الميلاد. يبدو أنها غير مسبوقه من الناحية النمطية ، لكنها مع ذلك تنتمي إلى فئة معروفة من المسامير الموجودة في جميع أنحاء بلاد الرافدين وسهول سوسيانا في خوزستان ، والتي يعود تاريخها إلى الألفية الرابعة إلى الأولى قبل الميلاد. في هذه المقالة ، لا ننشر عن المسامير من أميان فحسب ، بل نضعها أيضًا في سياقها من خلال مقارنتها بمسامير أخرى من الطين الموجودة في شمال وادي الرافدين يعود تاريخها إلى النصف الثاني من الألفية الثانية قبل الميلاد. سنقترح في النهاية من خلال القيام بذلك تعريفًا أوليًا لهذه الأشياء.