

12 ICAANE

Proceedings of the 12th International Congress
on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East

Volume 1

Environmental Archaeology

Hammering the material world

Cognitive archaeology

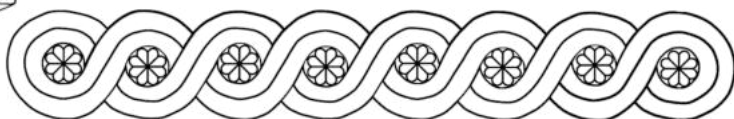
Modeling the past

Networked archaeology

Endangered cultural heritage



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Edited by
Nicolò Marchetti, Michael Campeggi,
Francesca Cavaliere, Claudia D'Orazio,
Gabriele Giacosa, Eleonora Mariani

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The 12th ICAANE, Bologna: Foreword and Acknowledgments

Nicolò Marchetti

The defining event of the 12th ICAANE is, of course, that it has actually taken place, if not in a way that it could actually be foreseen. When the pandemic brought to strict lockdowns all over the world in March 2020, we were less than a month away from the Congress and this forced us to steer course through uncharted waters. That the 1033 initially registered participants were still 883 (of whom 64% regular and 36% students, plus *c.* 100 Middle Eastern officials) a year later within a totally different, remote formula is something to be credited to the trust as well as the sense of community of our colleagues and their determination to serve science and keep close mutual contacts alive despite all odds. 548 papers (including 192 of them distributed in 23 workshops) and 71 posters were presented in up to 15 parallel sessions: 142 papers about the main themes are published in these two volumes.

The Congress attempted at representing a multidisciplinary environment where to pursue interconnections (geographical and chronological as well) and inclusivity at all levels: just looking at the first authors, we have an almost perfect balance of women and men from 43 countries (Europe 68%, Asia 22%, North America 8% and Oceania 2%). Eight themes were selected in an attempt at representing the current breadth and urgency of global challenges and research perspectives: 1. Field Reports. Recent excavations, surveys and research; 2. Environmental Archaeology. Changing climate and exploitation strategies: impact on ecology, anthropized landscapes and material culture; 3. Hammering the material world. Characterization of material culture, processes and technologies; 4. Cognitive archaeology. Reading symbolic and visual communication networks and structures; 5. Modeling the past. Contemporary theoretical approaches to the archaeology of economies and societies; 6. Networked archaeology. Global challenges and collaborative research in the new millennium; 7. Endangered cultural heritage. Coordinated multilateral research, conservation and development strategies; 8. Islamic archaeology. Continuities and discontinuities between a deep past and modernity.

The trust that the ICAANE International Committee showed in 2018 towards the 12th ICAANE Organizing Committee of the Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna about managing such a complex event must be acknowledged at the very onset. That the University of Bologna in the first place accepted to host an ICAANE was remarkable: the then Rector Francesco Ubertini is to be credited with unlimited enthusiasm for the idea and the Head of the Department of Legal Studies Michele Caianiello followed suit in ceding for a week to the Congress his most precious commodity, the perfectly functional Belmeloro lecturing complex, without which it would not have been possible to think to such an endeavour. The then Head of our Department of History and Cultures, Paolo Capuzzo, and our Department Administration were outstanding in showing at every corner flexibility and commitment as well as allocating resources for the Congress. We greatly benefitted from the experience and creativity in handling large scientific events of the FAM-Fondazione Alma Mater (and Alessandro Vrizz, in particular, has been invaluable all throughout).

The ISMEO – Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l’Oriente and its President Adriano Rossi allotted a grant for the Congress’ organization and helped us assist and manage colleagues in Iran. The publishers Harrassowitz, Brill and Ante Quem supported the prize for the best poster by gifting books to the winners (C. Sadozai and S. Moriset “Post-excavation

treatments of earthen archaeological sites”). Iperceramica and its CEO Corrado Neri assigned a prize in cash for the best paper on ancient tiles (M.-S. Zeβin “Marks on Glazed Bricks of the Neo-Assyrian Period from Ashur”), while the cash prize offered by Carpigiani remained unassigned. To all of them we are truly grateful for their generous support.

The Directors General of antiquities from Turkey, Iran, Iraq as well as KRG, Syria, Cyprus, Lebanon, Palestinian National Authority, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Egypt accepted to present the policies and needs of their respective Countries about cultural heritage in a plenary session: this was a great honor and we are deeply grateful to them for their enduring trust and friendship. In the Opening Session, then students Giulia Piraccini, Margherita Robecchi, Roberto Santoro, Alice Zamarchi (coordinated by Ahmad Addous) performed a poetry reading in Arabic, Turkish, Farsi and English of the “Hymn of the Rain (Unshūdat al-Matar),” by Badr Shākir Al-Sayyāb. The musician Réda Zine played a memorable performance: “Reviewing the MENA musical heritage. Gwana music from Guembri to electric guitar.” We are most grateful to all of them as well as to the colleagues who accepted to e-chair sessions, to the four keynote speakers selected only on the basis of the quality of their submitted papers (here published as the opening essays of themes 2, 3 and 1), to all the participants who have been almost invariably sympathetic towards our shortcomings and many requests to them and to the legions of anonymous referees for their hard work which enormously improved the contents of these Proceedings.

Bologna Welcome and ER.GO with its Director Patrizia Mondin were ready to host colleagues and students to the best of their considerable ability: that in the end they did not have a chance to fulfill that, does not subtract from their keen availability. The online infrastructure, Ibrida.io of Search On Media Group, offered us an immersive and seamless experience of a remote conference fully functional under every aspect: not only the professionalism of Vito Esposito and his vast team was appreciated by all participants, but their subsequent acceptance of our request to grant free access to (and thus to keep online) the recordings of all sessions for almost a year after the end of the Congress added an immense value to its dissemination and tore down economic barriers in accessing state-of-the-art scientific knowledge for the global academic community.

The 12th ICAANE Scientific Advisory Board (Pascal Butterlin, Peter Fischer, Tim Harrison, Wendy Matthews, Adelheid Otto, Glenn Schwartz, Ingolf Thuesen) proved extremely helpful in steering the Congress out of controversies and helped taking strategic decisions at all steps. The energy and dedication of the 12th ICAANE Unibo Executive Team (Michael Campeggi, Vittoria Cardini, Francesca Cavaliere, Claudia D’Orazio, Valentina Gallerani, Gabriele Giacosa, Elena Maini, Eleonora Mariani, Chiara Mattioli, Jacopo Monastero, Valentina Orrù, Giulia Roberto, Marco Valeri and Federico Zaina) have been admirable before, during and after the Congress. The volunteers Vanessa Ferrando, Noemi La Cara, Ylenia Viggiano and Elena Bandiera generously gave us their time and talents, and G. Roberto designed all the graphics. Outstanding in their roles have been C. D’Orazio as Scientific Secretary of the Congress and F. Cavaliere as Editorial Coordinator: we are all indebted to their rigorous and meticulous organizational skills.

Harrassowitz Verlag with its Director Stephan Specht was as dedicated as it can be to the Congress and accepted to publish our Proceedings in Golden Open Access, while Jens Fetkenheuer has been a solid reference for all technical issues. The care and passion with which Federica Proni of Te.M.P.L.A. has typeset these two volumes cannot be praised enough. In releasing these Proceedings to the press, together with the other Editors we hope that they will represent a useful service to an international scientific community which is growing stronger and more closely knit after each ICAANE, hopefully standing up to the grave challenges lying in front of us for the protection, study, conservation and presentation of an ever more endangered cultural heritage.

Modeling the Past

Temples in the Sacred Area of the Kothon at Motya and Their Levantine Prototypes: Recent Discoveries by Sapienza University of Rome

Federica Spagnoli¹

Abstract

Excavations in the island of Motya, at the western tip of Sicily, by Sapienza University of Rome since 2002 have radically changed our knowledge of this Phoenician colony and its history. Cult places and temples found in the Sacred Area of the Kothon, spanning four centuries, have shown how deeply rooted is the religious architectural tradition of “Western Phoenicians” into that of the homeland. This article provides examples of these relationships and suggests a twofold direction of cultural exchanges during the 1st millennium BC, one between Phoenicia and Motya, and the other relating to the Hellenic world, increasingly influential in Motya from the 6th century BC onwards.

Introduction: Motya Before the Phoenicians²

Classical sources ascribe the beginning of the Phoenician colonization in the Mediterranean to the end of the 2nd millennium BC (Aubet 2001: 161-163; Broodbank 2015: 488-489), but so far this information was not supported by archaeological data. Recent excavations, at Cadiz in Spain (Torres Ortiz *et al.* 2014: 53, fig. 2g; Gonzales de Canales, Serrano Pichardo and Llompart Gómez 2006: 15-17; 2008: 631-634), Utica in Tunisia (Lopez Castro *et al.* 2016: 74, fig. 6), and Motya in Western Sicily (Nigro 2016: 339-340; Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: 4; Nigro 2020a: 102), brought to light the earliest attestations of the Phoenician presence in these areas, dating back to the end of the 2nd millennium BC (Suárez-Padilla, Jiménez-Jáimez and Caro 2021: 1495-1496), and have given archaeological consistency to the ancient texts.

The Phoenicians settled in Sicily at the end of the 9th century BC, initially in the eastern part of the island. Later they were pressed by the Greek colonists, and so they moved to the west, where they established their colonies, Motya, Panormo and Solunto (Bondi 1989: 137).

Sapienza University has been operating in Motya since 1964, when Antonia Ciasca took up the excavations of the Tofet and later in Seventies the dig of the city walls (Nigro 2004a: 21-29). The Sapienza archaeological Expedition at Motya directed by Lorenzo Nigro resumed excavations in 2002 in several areas of the island. Twenty years of excavations have allowed to sequence the history of Motya into periods and phases basing on the stratigraphy (Nigro 2015a: table 1). The oldest settlement of Motya dates to the end of the Early/Middle Bronze Age (Motya II-III A, 15th-13th centuries BC). The village of this period is perfectly soaked in the regional *facies* of Rodì-Tindari-Vallelunga (Tusa 2008: 71; Ardesia 2013-

1 Italian Institute of Oriental Studies (ISO), Sapienza University of Rome.

2 I would like to thank Lorenzo Nigro, Director of the Sapienza archaeological Expedition at Motya, for giving me permission to publish the data and materials discussed in this article.

2014: 132). The ceramic imports also show that in this early phase Motya was included in the Mediterranean routes and trades, as shown by the Levantine, Mycenaean, and Maltese potteries, as vases of the Borj in-Nadur phase attest (Caltabiano 2007: 109; Caltabiano and Spagnoli 2007: 119-120, fn. 8; Nigro 2016: 340-341; Armstrong *et al.* 2020: 260). The Late Bronze Age settlement was flourishing like the earlier one. Pottery imports testify to the relations between the inhabitants of Motya and Levantines and Cypriots, but relations with the West of Mediterranean, and with the Sardinian-Nuragic populations, are also attested to (Nigro 2016: 352-353; 2020a: 98-99).

After this long period of entanglement of east-west sea routes, at the end of the 9th century BC the pressure of the Neo-Assyrian Empire on the Phoenician and Levantine cities becomes stronger, and the Phoenicians intensified their trades to the West in search of new sources of raw materials and new markets, starting a new wave of expansionism that led to the foundation of colonies (Aubet 2001: 54-60; Bonnet, Guillon and Porzia 2020: 96-97).

The Earlier Cult Places (Motya IVA, 800-750 BC): Shrine C14, the First Temple of Baal (C5) and the Temple of Astarte (C12)

The first core of the Phoenician colony in Motya is in the southern part of the island, facing the most easily accessible place from the southern entrance of the Marsala Lagoon (Nigro and Spagnoli 2012: 2-3). In this area the phreatic aquifer of Motya rises in altitude until it emerges on the surface in a natural pond, fed by the largest freshwater spring, and other minor springs. The settlement consists of a large building (Building C8) (Nigro 2013: 44-45), a small dwelling quarter and a shrine (Shrine C14). Building C8 combines a part used as a warehouse and a part used for communal events (Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: 10-11, fig. 15; Spagnoli 2020a: 120-122)³. The complex architectural plan of this building combined three sectors: a front double row of rooms, with a central entrance; three parallel long rooms, displaced transversally in the rear east wing, and a square courtyard to the west, serving three rows of rooms south, north, and west (Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: 13-17, fig. 22). The distribution of the rooms reflects an architectural model already used in Phoenician buildings, as the Early Iron Age Building in Sidon (Doumet-Serhal 2013: 109, fig. 54).

Close to Building C8 was the dwelling zone, enlarged in the 7th century BC in the Quarter of South Gate (Isserlin 1962-1963: 116-117; Nigro and Lisella 2004: 78-82), and around 20 m inland, north of it, an open cult place was set up, aside the pond (Fig. 1). It included a rectangular shrine, several cult installations, an obelisk-like stele, *baetyls*, a sacred well, and three major votive pits for different kinds of offerings (Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: figs. 7-9). Shrine C14 in its early phase (Phase 9, 800-750 BC) was a later outcome of the Syrian “long-room temple with ante-room”, a Bronze Age temple plan still attested in Iron Age II Levant⁴. Shrine C14 has a rectangular plan 11.02 x 4.72 m⁵, with an entrance opened to the south, the inner space (anteroom or *cella*) had low benches along its sides. On the short eastern side, this long room hosted the sacred back room (*adyton*). The *adyton* held the cult installations of the shrine: a funnel-shaped installation of stone slabs, which served as *mundus* (a hole for pouring libations). Aside the sacred hole there was a shallow altar consisting in a limestone

3 All images of the present article are credited to the Sapienza Archaeological Expedition at Motya.

4 The “long-room” model of temples is widely diffused in many Iron Age Phoenician and Levantine sites (Kamlah 2012: 516-517, 521). Other contemporary attestation is at Kition-*Kathari*, Temple 2 (Karagheorgis 2003: 57-60).

5 Corresponding to 21 x 5 cubits.

slab⁶. A drain, from the back side of the altar flowed through the rear wall of the building into the space eastward outside of it. On the northern side of the altar, a thin carinated stela was standing with a plastered hollow underneath (or *eschara*), apparently used for burning incense or aromatic woods (Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: 8, fig. 6).

The space around the shrine had a cult function and hosted several installations. A focal point was surely represented by the spring spilling out at the NE corner of the shrine, as a later use of this space as votive *favissa* attests (F. 864)⁷. South of the shrine, the open area was occupied by other installations: a rounded sacred well in front of the temple entrance, and an obelisk-like stela, flanked by a square slab. These installations last in use in the following architectural phase too (Phase 8, 750-675 BC). East of the obelisk, two square slabs embedded into the floor suggest the presence of other self-standing monuments, such as wooden pillars. In between the *baetyl* and the slab there is a shallow hollow, paved with small flat stones, in the floor. The construction of the underground canals connecting the temple's cult holes to the sacred lake (later transformed in the Kothon), probably dates to this phase (Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: 8-9).

A second cult point south-east of the shrine C14 consists of a roughly circular depositional space where metal offerings and minerals were buried in small pits, and covered by stone slabs: the chthonic significance of the offerings, such as iron and copper slag, broken nails, spikes, minerals with polished or shiny surfaces, suggest a cult for a god of the underworld (Nigro and Spagnoli 2012: 10-12).

The third cult compound was a round depression (5 m large and 0.5-0.7 m deep) located south-west of the shrine. Here, a series of offering pits were excavated for depositing broken pottery vessels, burnt part of sacrificed animals, small beads, iron slags and charcoal. Such offerings suggest the performance of a ritual meal accompanying the deposition, and each deposit was signed by a small *baetyl* or unworked stone marker.

The pottery of the shrine C14 includes Red Slip plates belonging to a type widespread in Phoenicia, and a Nuragic askos-juglet (Nigro 2010: 13, fig. 11) dating back to the end of 9th-beginning of 8th century BC. This repertoire allows us to date the construction of the first cult place of the Phoenician colony and underlines the early contacts between the Phoenicians settled in Sicily, and Sardinia, an important stage in the route to the Iberian Peninsula (Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: 99).

Within a few decades (Motya IVB, Phase 8, 750-675 BC), Shrine C14, and a part of the offering space surrounding it, were incorporated into a larger building, the Temple C5, one of the oldest western Phoenician temples built according to the plan of the "four-room building", already widespread in the Levant from the beginning of the 1st millennium BC (Gilboa, Sharon and Zorn 2014; Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg 2006). This planimetric model, re-adapted for the sacred architecture, is contemporary attested at Kition-*Kathari* Temple I and in central and western Mediterranean in the 8th century BC (Aubert 2006: fig. 7.5). Nevertheless, the planimetries of both Temple I at Kition and Temple of Baal C5 (and C1 in the following Phase 5) at Motya differ from the original Levantine model, as in the two temples the inner spaces are not divided by walls but by pillars or columns. This feature rather approximates

6 The slab measures 3 x 2 cubits (1.57 x 1.05 m).

7 The *favissa* F.864 hosted the cult installations of the Temple (stela and *baetyls*) dismantled after the conquest of Motya by Dionysius of Syracuse in 397/6 BC. (Spagnoli 2014a: 94) Another *favissa* F.5108, located south of the Temple of Baal, held the cult installations and offerings of Temple C2 (Spagnoli 2016: 1).

the planimetric scheme to another architectural model attested in the Levant, which is not, however, related to sacred architecture, that of the “tripartite pillared building”, from which we might assume an at least indirect influence (Herr 1988: 47).

Temple C5 (Fig. 2) consists of three parallel spaces oriented east-west, and a fourth transversal space to the east, called Eastern Wing. The northern *cella* and the *adyton* are drawn on the plan of the earlier shrine (C14): the altars and cult installations of Shrine C14 are re-used in Temple C5 (Nigro and Spagnoli 2012: 86-87), and also the central open court also hosted the main cult installations of the previous phase: three *baetyls* arrayed at regular intervals along the E-W axis and offering tables. Around the *baetyls* are the other cult devices, as libation holes and the rounded well. The *baetyls* are twofold, because on the one hand, they symbolize the presence of the deity (or deities), and on the other, they play a role in rituals: the squared hollows cut at their sides hosted small offerings, dedications and *tabellae defixionis*. The southern part of the court was a pillared vestibule, while the Eastern Wing was a paved offering space for metal slabs. The nature of offerings confirms that the cult was worshipped to a god of underworld and underground water, as the Phoenician god Baal. This is further evidenced by the inscription found in the *favissa* F. 2950, located south of the Temple, which reports the name of the deity (Nigro and Spagnoli 2012: 8-9). The inscription is engraved on the handle of a Laconic *aryballos* dated 560-550 BC: it is a Greek inscription in Doric dialect that reads: *I am sacred to Belios*, that is the *interpretatio graeca* of the Phoenician Baal (Guizzi 2012: 15, fig. 1).

North of the temple of Baal there is another sacred building dedicated to Astarte (C12, Phases 8-7, Motya IVB, 750-675 BC) (Fig. 3). The deity of the temple has been identified by two inscriptions found in Phases 5-4 layers, reporting the one the dedication (L'RBT) and the other the epithet of the goddess (*Aglaia*, shining) (Nigro 2015a: 240, figs. 16-17). The temple is a mono-cellular shrine with rectangular shape⁸ with the longest axis oriented north-south. Its plan and internal arrangement show strong similarities with the Shrine of Astarte at Sarepta (Pritchard 1978: 13-18, figs. 33-34; Spagnoli 2020b: 91, fig. 2): the entrance is offset from the cultural pole consisting of a podium leaning against the western short side. It measured 1.04 x 0.52 m and was made by two superimposed courses of mudbricks. Along the long sides are two mudbrick benches used for holding offerings and cult objects. The entrance of the temple⁹ was framed by two pillars, one of the most distinctive features of the Phoenician sacred architecture, supported by blocks jutting out from the wall (Nigro 2015b: 89, with previous bibliography).

Crisis and Reconstruction in the Mid of the 6th century BC: The Monumental Temple of Baal (C1) and the New Temple of Astarte (C6) (Motya VIB, phase 5, 520-470 BC)

The turmoil that in the 6th century BC affected the Tyrrhenian regions of the Central Mediterranean also involved Motya, since in many areas of the island a thick layer of destruction testifies to a crisis. The historical events that affected Motya during this century are connected to three episodes: the raid of Pentatlo of Cnido (580 BC), the battle of Alalia and the expedition of Malco the Carthaginian to Sicily (540-535 BC),¹⁰ and the attempt of

8 The rectangular room measures 8.3 x 4.1 m.

9 The door is 1.65 m wide.

10 The Tyrrhenian expedition offers to Malco the pretext for extending the power of Carthage over the Phoenician cities of Sardinia, and over Western Sicily as well (Mastino 2005: 44-45). In Sicily, however, at this time Malco failed: at Motya, from the 6th to the 4th century BC we have no evidence of Carthaginian

Dorieus the Spartan to establish a Greek colony between Solunto and Panormo, within the Phoenician part of Sicily (520 BC) (Spagnoli 2019: 63-64). After these decades of disorders and political instability (Motya VIA, 550-520 BC), that led to the destruction of several parts of the city (Nigro 2019a: 22, fn. 8), Motya changed its urban layout, as the damaged areas were enlarged and monumentalized, and a defensive wall was built around the city (Nigro 2016: 228-230, table 1; 2020: 13-16).

The southern sector of the island underwent major changes. A large circular wall 118 m in diameter, called “Circular *Temenos*”, redraws the area of the sacred complex, enclosing or excluding the pre-existing buildings (Fig. 4). Building C8 was destroyed in the middle of the 6th century BC and never rebuilt, as it was razed to make place for the layout of the *Temenos*. The Temple of Baal and the Temple of Astarte were deeply modified.

The Temple of Baal (Temple C1) is enlarged (Fig. 5): the entrance is highlighted by a huge threshold, framed by two semi-pillars crowned by a Phoenician capital¹¹ preceded by two free-standing pillars. A porch nave is added to the west, while maintaining the original layout based on the plan of the “four-room building”¹² (Nigro 2009: 255-257, fig. 13). Furthermore, the sacred installations in the open court, as the three *baetyls* and the well lasted in use with minor changes: the mouth of the well, (circular in origin) changed in square hole bordered by four rectangular blocks (Nigro 2004b: 79-80; 2012a: 233-234; 2012b: 298). One of the earliest examples of the “four-room building” model employed in Phoenician sacred architecture is represented by the Temple of Astarte at Kition. In the sacred complex excavated by V. Karageorghis the Iron Age Temple 1 gives the best exemplification of the planimetric typology: the tripartite plan, and overall dimensions (27 x 18 m) are very similar to those of the Temple of the Kothon (Nigro 2012a; 2013: 53 n. 89, with bibliography). Both sacred buildings, in their original architectural shape, were subdivided into three naves, with a transversal wing juxtaposed on one short side, and the entrance at the end of the southern nave¹³. Moving to the Southern Levant, and especially to Palestine, the scheme of the “four room building” has been detected, with local variations, in several cult places, attesting how this planimetric model has been enrooted in Phoenician and Levantine Iron Age architectural tradition at least until the 7th century BC.¹⁴

hegemony, neither political nor cultural, as several features of the material culture attest (De Vincenzo 2013: 7-8). The substantial independence of Motya from Carthage is reflected in the independent stylistic evolution of the stelae of the Tofet, that remain faithful to the Egyptianizing model while in Carthage they borrow the shape from Greek architecture, entire classes of typically Carthaginian materials (e.g., the bronze razors) are missing. Motya still looks to the Phoenician and Levantine world, rather than to the North African colony, as indicated by the choice of erecting a statue in Phoenician-Cypriot style in the centre of the sacred area of the Kothon (Bondi 1989: 169-170; Bartoloni 1987: 81, 84-85).

11 The so-called proto-aeolian capital is one of the most typical features of the Phoenician architecture, as it decorated pillars, columns, and the sides of the entrance of the temples (Nigro 2015b: 90-91).

12 The persistency of this model is connected to the Cypriot and Aegean component of Phoenician architectural tradition (Nigro 2012b: 307).

13 In Cyprus other important buildings offer many comparative elements for the Temple of the Kothon, i.e. the Temple of Aphrodite at Kouklia-*Palaepaphos*, and the Temple of Kition-*Bamboula* (Karageorghis 2003: 104-106).

14 The similarities between the planimetric model of the Temple of the Kothon and the principal Levantine sacred compounds, such as the Southern Temple at Beth Shan (11th century BC), Buildings 2081 and 338 at Megiddo (9th-8th century BC), and the later example of the Temple 650 at Khirbet el-Muqanna (7th century BC), are largely discussed in Nigro 2012b: 308-311.

The Shrine of Astarte (C6), north of the Temple of Baal (C1) undergoes major changes (Nigro 2018: 258; 2019a: 109-110). The building was literally cut through in the middle by the Circular *Temenos* (Fig. 6). The part that is left outside the wall falls into disuse while the temple is shifted around 3 m southwards and rebuilt inside the area surrounded by the *Temenos*. The Shrine C6 is shaped as a temple *in antis*, with an entrance porch supported by two wooden columns with a stone base. A central entrance¹⁵, introduced into a broad room *cella*¹⁶, and is in line with the cult niche¹⁷ opened on the long side. Probably the niche originally hosted the simulacrum of the Goddess.¹⁸

The Last Monumental Phase of the Sacred Area of the Kothon (Motya VII, Phase 4, 470-397/6 BC)

About 470 BC the Sacred Area of the Kothon underwent a new destruction. This gave the opportunity for another reconstruction which again involved the main cult buildings and the *Temenos* itself.

The Temple of Baal (C1) was further modified and enlarged: The new building, named Temple C2 (Fig. 7) connected to the monumental *propylaeum* of the circular *temenos* by an eastern annex (East Wing), was built up with the four-room building plan (Nigro 2012b: 299; Spagnoli 2019: 334-335), and the other temples of the sacred area were rebuilt or restored (Nigro 2015a: 234-35, fig. 10).

A new reconstruction concerned the Temple of Astarte (C4) (Fig. 8). The niche is closed, the *cella* reduced in its width by a partition wall added to the east, while the niche was restricted on its eastern side to the overall width of 0.9 m. The *cella* changed its orientation and the cult focus moved from the northern to the western side, where a new podium and a *cippus* made by local sandstone were set up (Nigro 2019b: 110-1123, fig. 11). In the same side of the Temple, where it intersected the *Temenos*, a circular votive pit¹⁹ used for the ritual activity, gave back a bronze coin²⁰ and the foot of an Attic Black Ware cup intentionally broken in half, incised in the bottom with a cross and a Greek inscription bearing the epithet of the Goddess: AGL[AIA] (Nigro 2015a: 236-237).

The porch was transformed, leaving a single column in the middle, and reducing the width of the central entrance. The reduction of the *cella* within the temple was compensated by the space outside it in the forecourt, occupied by other deposits and votive pits revealing an intense cult activity outside around the building (Nigro 2019a: 116-119).

15 The doorway is 1.30 m wide.

16 The *cella* measures 3.38 x 1.82 m.

17 The niche was marked by a 0.5 m wide step and had an internal width of 1.54 m.

18 The simulacrum of the Goddess consisted of a protome with polos inspired, for the volumes of the face, the headdress and the headgear, by the models of late archaic Greek statuary (Richter 1968: 81, no. 127, figs. 411-416). It is probably the head of a polymateric statue, possibly made of wood, found in the 2021 campaign in a votive pit not far from the temple, outside the *Temenos* (Nigro 2022a: 208-209), together with the temple's sacred furnishings, a rosette-shaped *pintadera* and a dolphin-shaped mould, and the remains of an obliteration ritual (miniature vases, iron and bronze objects, remains of a meal) (Nigro 2022b: 48). The protome and furnishings, just like the sacred ornaments and installations of the temple of Baal, were hidden in the *stipe* in the imminence of the siege of Motya by the army of Dionysius of Syracuse leading to the destruction of the city in 397/6 BC.

19 The pit has diameter of 1 m and a depth of 0.2 m.

20 Unfortunately, the organic components of the pit filling had badly corroded the coin surfaces, so that it was impossible to recognize details.

However, the structure that undergoes the most changes is the Kothon, the sacred pool lying at the centre of the Sacred Area. The earlier lake that characterized the natural environment of the first Phoenician settlement at the beginnings of the 8th century BC is modified in a rectangular pool – the Kothon – dug into clay and fed by the spring that flows from the north side (Nigro 2014: 8-9; Nigro and Spagnoli 2017: 49, fig. 7).

The pool measures 52.5 x 36.5 m (100 x 70 cubits) and gets the geometric and ideological center of the Sacred Area (Fig. 9). It is a cult structure itself, physically connected to the Temple of Baal through many underground channels that feed the Sacred Well in the court of the Temple. Many votive and cult objects have been found along the north and east sides, such as an Egyptian baboon statue, *baetyls* and broken pottery (Nigro 2014: 18).

The excavation of the Kothon highlighted the presence of architectural elements along the sides, such as column drums, bases, and capitals. This suggests that the Kothon in Phoenician times had a monumental shape, not far from the contemporary Phoenician sanctuaries such as the Throne of the pool of Astarte in Sidon Bostan es-Sheikh and the Maabed of Amrit (Dunand 1971: 19-20; Dunand and Saliby 1985), that probably shared with the Kothon its principal features, as the porches on three sides, and a shrine in the center holding the image of the deity (Nigro 2014: 90-91). The sounding carried out at the center of the Kothon revealed the presence of a basement or podium, dismantled in Medieval times, when the blocks were deployed along the west and south sides of the pool (Nigro 2014: 26-27). In the 1918 Joseph Whitaker found a molded block east of the Kothon, with a foot of a colossal statue carved on it. The stone of the block is identical to that of the podium, and possibly it is the upper part of the podium itself. It is plausible to assume that the podium supported a monumental statue. In 1933 a colossal statue was incidentally found off the «Contrada Spagnola» seashore, in the Marsala Lagoon, close to the landing dock to Motya (Mingazzini 1938: 505-506; Falsone 1970: 57-58). The statue is the so-called Statue of the Marsala Lagoon, and it could be the colossus originally dominated the centre of the Kothon.

The statue represents a male shirtless figure dressing a *shenti* kilt, the right arm resting along the side and the left hand close in a fist to the chest (Fig. 10). The statue is a product of the so-called Phoenician-Cypriot sculptural style of the end of the 6th century BC, and it was probably imported to Motya from Cyprus or the Levant (Falsone 1970: 59, fig. 3). According on the size and the material, there is a good chance that the sandstone block with the foot found by Whitaker, and the statue of the Lagoon have belonged to the same colossal statue, that was originally located on the basement at the center of the Kothon, representing the principal deity worshipped in the Sacred Area, namely Baal (Spagnoli 2021: 131-132). This colossal statue is probably the subject of several reliefs carved upon the stelae of the Tophet, where a male personage is represented in the same attitude of the statue in a monumental architectural frame, probably the replication of the structures surrounding the Kothon (Moscati and Uberti 1981: 51, pl. CLXII; Nigro 2014: 30-31).

The Sanctuary of the Holy Waters (Motya VIB, Phase 5, 520-470 BC/Motya VII, Phase 4, Motya 470-397/6 BC)

At the west end of its circular path, the *Temenos* curves with a right angle, and continues for a straight trait of about 12 m towards the Kothon the ideal center of the circumference. The wall continues up to a small depression in which a pair of lithic anchors was placed (Nigro

2018: 271-272). The anchors belong to a type widespread in the Levant²¹ at the end of the 2nd millennium BC (Nigro 2019a: fig. 31) (Fig. 11). Around the anchors was disposed the “Field of offerings”, consisting of numerous and rich deposits that gave back many valuable finds, such as an Egyptian scarab²² (Fig. 12), and objects in ivory and bronze (Nigro 2022a: 202-204), including a ring that depicts on the cartouche the face of Acheloos, a deity of the rivers (Fig. 13) (Naso 2003: 95-97, no. 146, pls. 51-53). The presence of this object further underlines the centrality of water not only in the cult worshipped in this sector but in the entire Sacred Area.

The “Field of offerings” was connected to a large complex, called Sanctuary of the Holy Waters, composed by three blocks, located to the west of the corner of the *Temenos* (Fig. 14).

The eastern building, Temple C11/C7, is a temple *in antis*, and shows two architectural phases, the earliest dating to the second half of the 6th century BC (Temple C11, Motya VIB, Phase 5, 520-470 BC), and the later of the 5th century BC (Temple C7, Motya VII, Phase 4, Motya 470-397/6 BC). The temple was framed along the north side by two parallel corridors connected to a settling basin (Nigro 2019a: fig. 28).

The Temple C11/C7 was oriented to the north-east: the entrance led to a large rectangular *cella* with an altar in the center and a slab for the sacrifices in the northern corner. The *adyton* hosted an altar-podium lying at the north-eastern corner, and at the back of the *adyton* there were two accessory rooms, perhaps warehouses for the offerings, where a stone *baetyl* was found. A staircase on the south gave access to the roof. The entrances of the *cella* and of the *adyton* were aligned, while a secondary passage connected the *adyton* to the corridors running along the north side of the temple. These corridors, that formed the second block of the compound, gave the access to the street that surrounded the *Temenos* (Fig. 15). In the corridor adjacent to the temple runs a channel connected to the slab for sacrifices placed in the north-eastern corner of the *cella* (Fig. 16).

The westernmost building, which is the third block of the Sanctuary, is now under excavation. The structure brought to light so far consists of a rectangular shrine (Shrine C9) rebuilt in the 4th century BC (Motya VIII, Phase 3, 397/6-350 BC). It lays over an earlier and larger building the square blocks of which are still visible and were used as foundations for the later shrine. The latter is related to the last cult use of the area until its final abandonment at the end of the 4th century BC. The Shrine C9 probably was built in Greek architectural style, as the fragment of a Doric column shaft found inside it would indicate.

Temple C11/C7 yielded the most interesting finds. In the north-west corner of the *cella* an Attic red-figure bell-shaped *krater* dated to 425 BC was found (Fig. 17). The *krater* is decorated with a symposium scene on side A, and above the scene we can read the name of one of the symposiasts, that is Alkimedon.²³ The *krater* is larger than the standard size, and

21 Frost 1973. Another stone anchor, originally held inside the Temple of Astarte (Shrine C12) as a votive offering, was embedded into the Circular *Temenos* when the Shrine C12 was dismantled: Nigro 2020b: 266, fig. 20.

22 Green feldspar scarab (MC.10.100) with a through hole. Engraving on the base of a Djed pillar surmounted by solar disk with triple Atef crown (Hemhem), flanked by two uraci, within a curb frame. This composition is common in the glazed amulets dating to 5th-3rd century BC (Andrews 1994: 82-83, fig. 84a).

23 Alkimedon is an evocative name recalling the famous episode of the Iliad, when Alkimedon the charioteer of Achilles, recovers the corpse of Patroclus and the armor of Achilles (Hom. *Il.* XVII:500-505). The Crater of Alkimedon is now under publication by Giulia Rocco, University of Rome “*La Vergata*”.

it was probably commissioned to an Attic workshop for the specific use in the temple (Nigro 2019b: 273, fig. 32).

In one of the back rooms of the Temple C11/C7 two terracotta molds dating back to the 5th century BC were found. The first mold (MC.13.100) represents the face of Demeter, wearing the typical polos, a low cylindrical headdress (Fig. 18) (Spagnoli 2013: 102, fig. 8). Demeter is a Greek deity very popular in Sicily in the 5th century BC, which in this period lent its iconography to Astarte, the deity worshiped in the Sacred Area, represented as aniconic in the Phoenician religious tradition. This mold has a strong symbolic value, since it is the offering not only of the image of the goddess but also of the technical expertise that had produced it. This representation of Astarte with the iconography of Demeter, moreover, testifies to the syncretism between the two deities²⁴, who shared many divine prerogatives such as rites of fertility and rites of passage (Spagnoli 2013: 159-160; 2017: 102-103).

The second mold (MC.13.45) represents a sphinx dominating a naked man (Fig. 19). This object is the emblem of the mixed character of the culture of Motya in the 5th century BC (Nigro 2015a: 234, fig. 9). A typically oriental iconography is here represented using the Greek stylistic language: the motif of the sphinx-pharaoh who overwhelms the enemy is commonly depicted in Phoenician ivories and other luxury objects²⁵.

Conclusions

This overview of the temples of the Sacred Area of Kothon in their different architectural phases shows that Levantine planimetric models remain the reference point in the design of buildings in all architectural phases over four centuries. In the numerous reconstructions and restorations that temples have undergone over the centuries, the concept of temple at the site remains deeply rooted in oriental architecture, despite the increased Hellenic influence since the 6th century BC (Spagnoli 2019: 65) The Kothon itself is framed in the architectural styles of the most classical Phoenician tradition (Spagnoli 2021: 130).

The Greek influence is most evident in the later C9 sanctuary, built in a Greek decorative style, as evidenced by the Doric column, although its plan still follows the oriental tradition. The “fidelity” to the Levantine models is counterbalanced by the progressive Hellenisation of the cult objects and votive offerings found in the Sacred Area,²⁶ which is well represented by the Greek Attic *krater* of Alkimedon.

On the other hand, however, other finds from the Sanctuary of the Holy Waters, such as the Egyptian scarab and the two terracotta molds, testify to how the oriental element is still dynamic in Motya in the 5th century BC, albeit reinterpreted according to Greek stylistic features (Spagnoli 2015a: 228; 2015b: 45). These objects emblematically represent the fertility of Motya’s cultural scenario, which combines Phoenician, Egyptianizing and Hellenic elements in an original melting-pot, which does not mislead but enriches the artistic panorama of the Phoenician city.

24 The complex phenomenon of the syncretism between “local” and “foreign” female deities in Southern Italy, is widely discussed in Parisi 2012 (Artemis) and Spatafora 2010 (Aphrodite and Demeter).

25 As an example, we mention the Ivory plaque of lioness mauling an African of the British Museum (Curtis and Reade 1995: 128, no. 91), and the bronze ornaments found in the royal tomb no. 79 of the necropolis of Salamis-Cellarka (Karagorghis 2003: 163-164, fig. 329).

26 The Hellenisation of the local ceramic repertoire is a well-known phenomenon in Motya from the middle of the 6th century BC (Spagnoli 2019: 66; 2014b: 117-118; Orsingher 2013: 693; 2018: 31-33).

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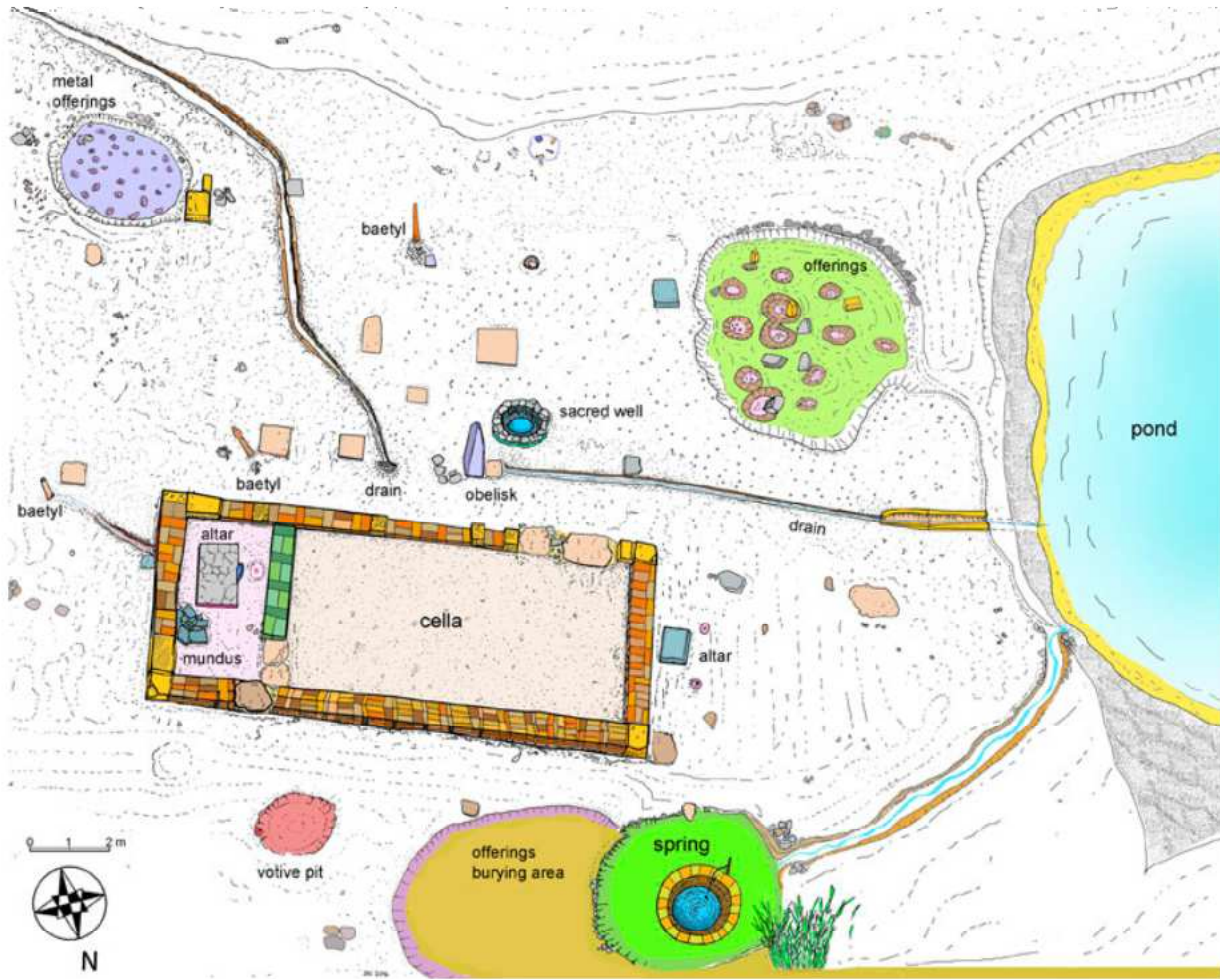


Fig. 1: Shrine C14 and the cult installations around it. Motya IVA, Phase 9, 800-750 BC

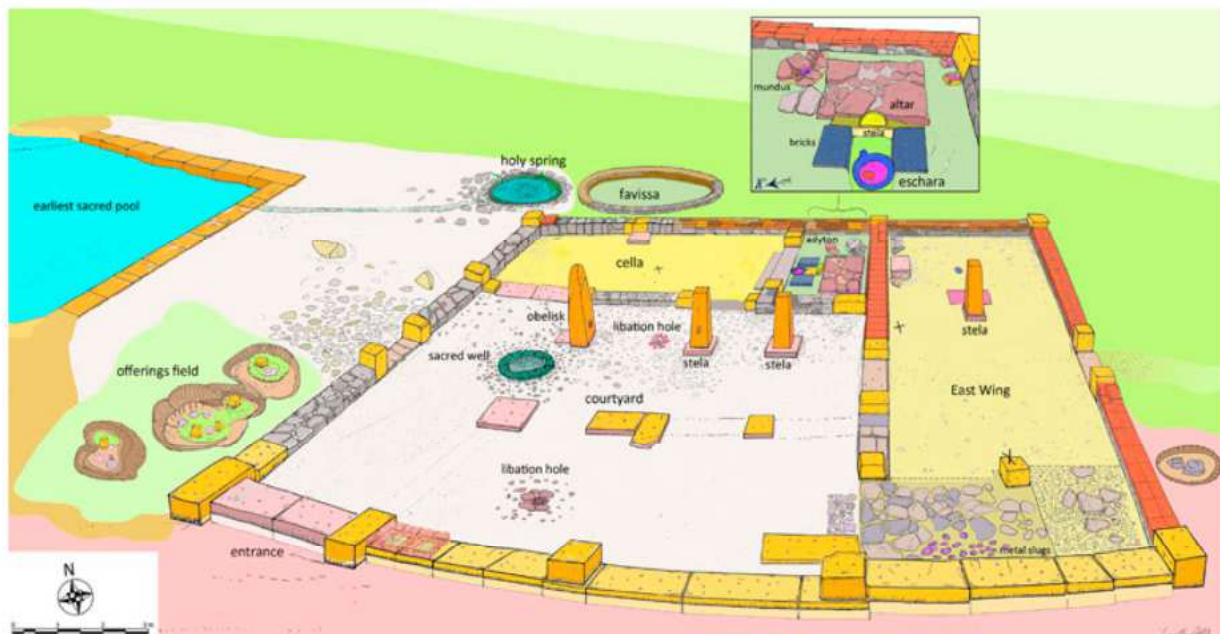


Fig. 2: Plan of the Temple of Baal (Temple C5) with its cult installations. Motya IVB, Phase 8, 750-675 BC

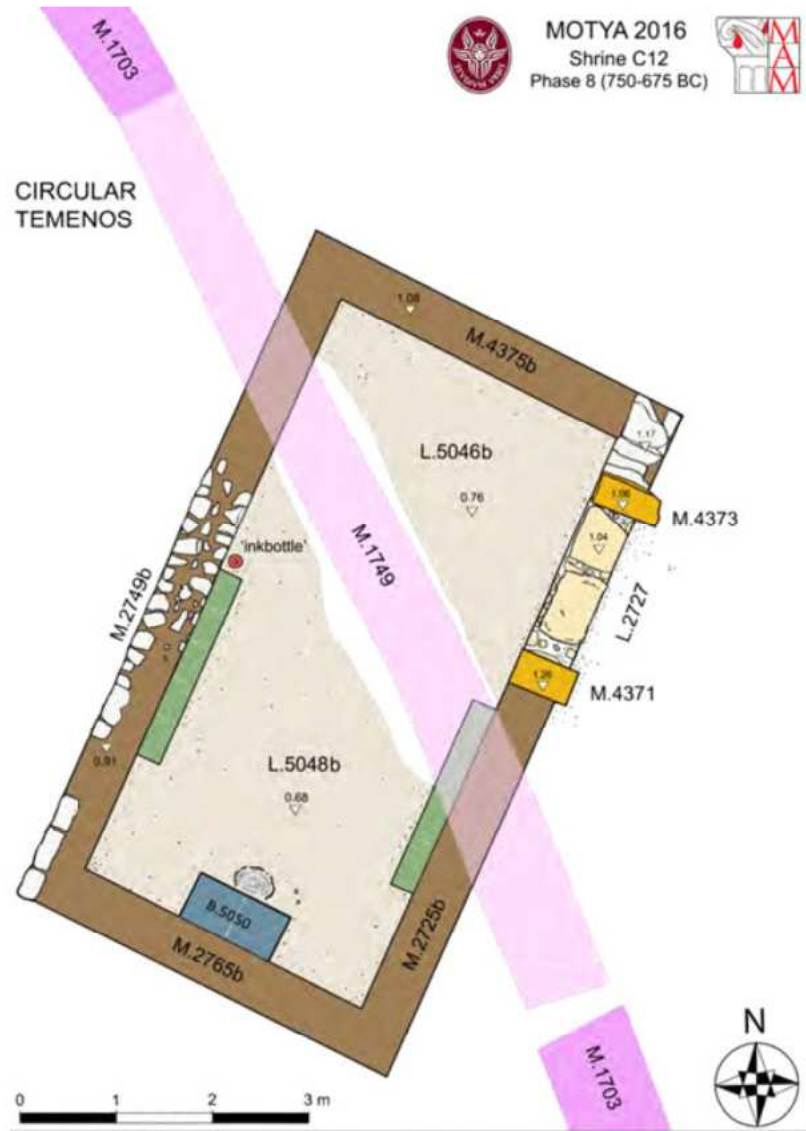


Fig. 3: Temple of Astarte (C12), Motya IVB, Phases 8-7, 750-675 BC



Fig. 4: The Circular *Temenos* surrounding the Sacred Area of the Kothon, view from North

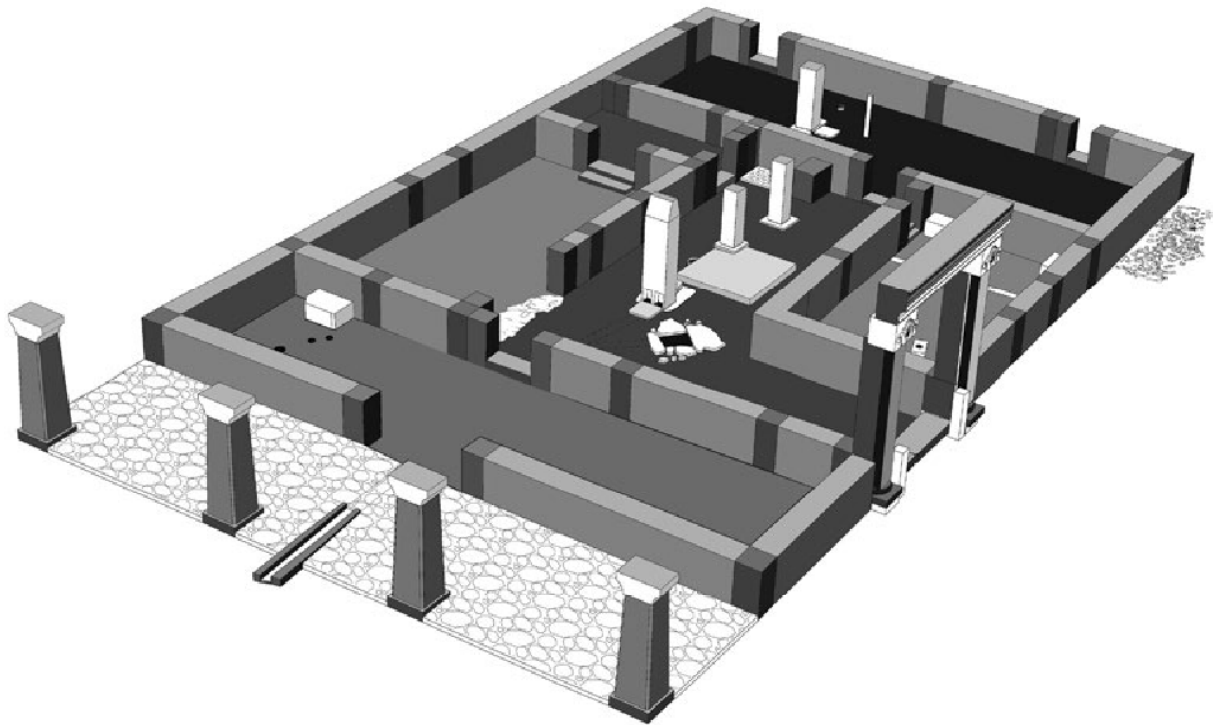


Fig. 5: Axonometry of the Temple of Baal - Temple C1, Motya VIA, Phase 5, 520-470 BC, showing the west and east wings annexed to the earlier temple (C5)

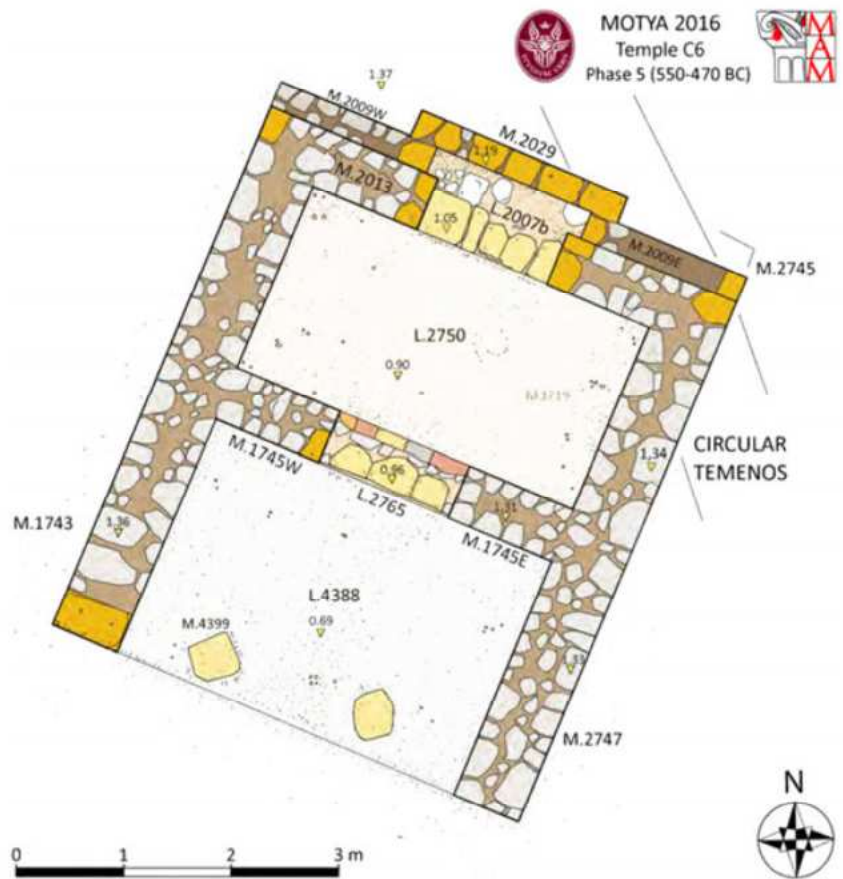


Fig. 6: Temple of Astarte (C6), Motya VIB, Phase 5, 520-470 BC

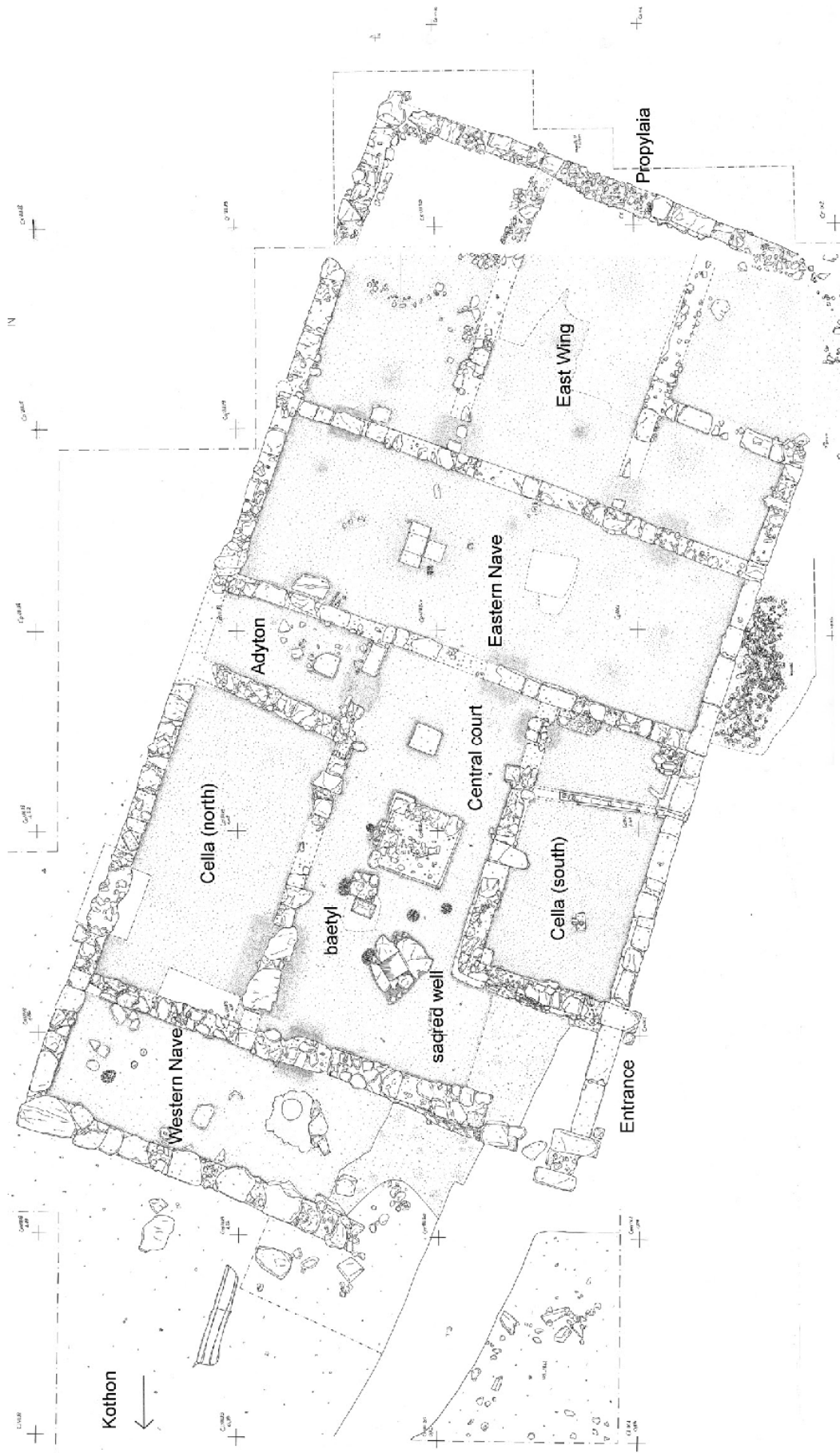


Fig. 7: Temple of Baal - Temple C2, Moya VII, Phase 4, 470-397/6 BC

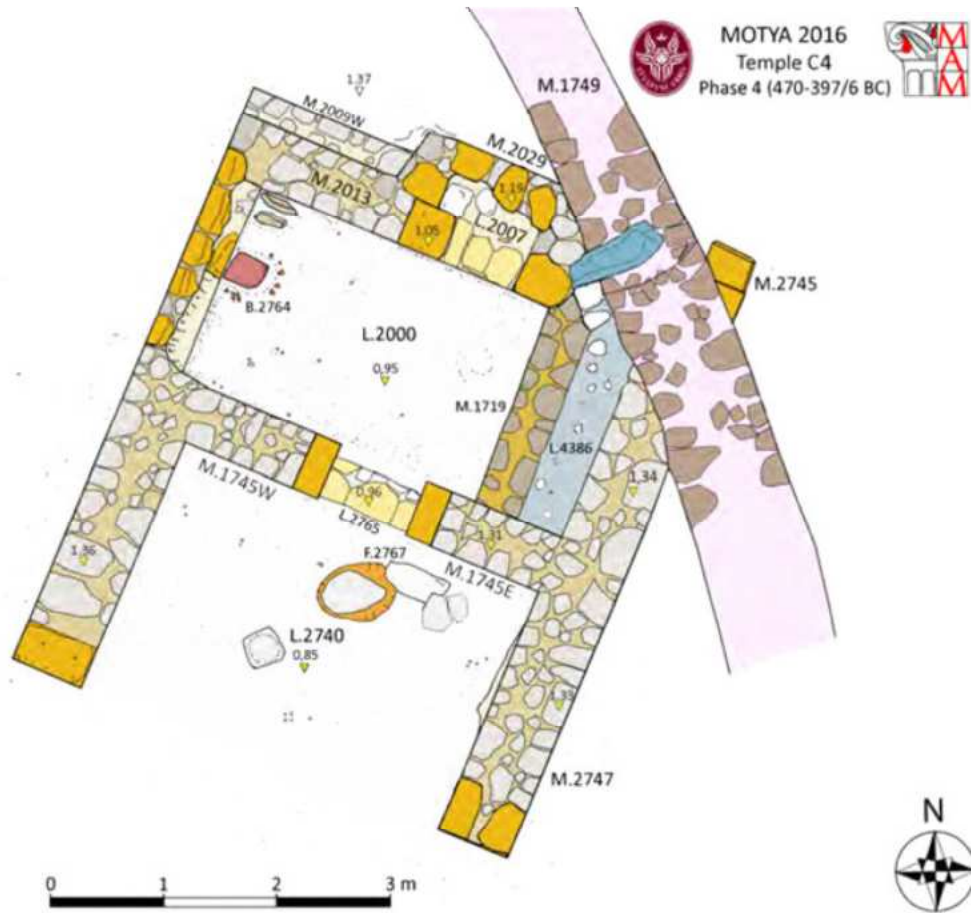


Fig. 8: Plan of the Temple of Astarte (C4), Motya VII, Phase 4, 470-397/6 BC

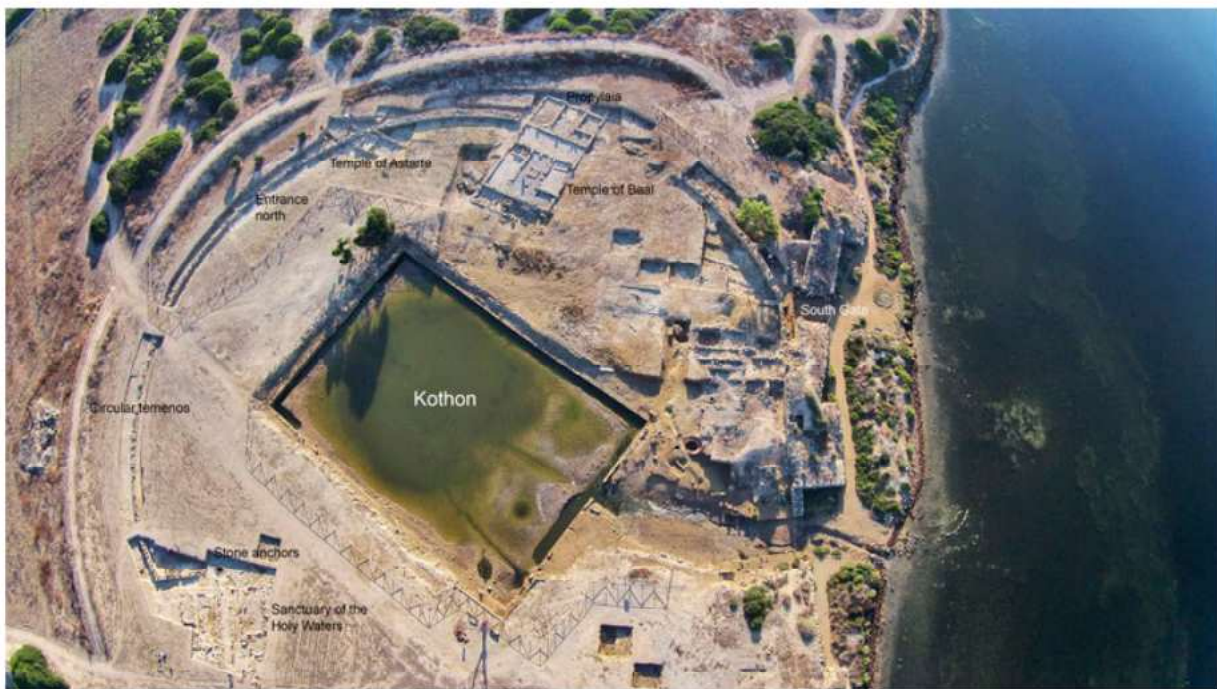


Fig. 9: Aerial view of the sacred area of the Kothon, Motya VII, Phase 4, 470-397/6 BC



Fig. 10: Colossal statue of Baal (525-500 BC) kept in the Archaeological Museum “Antonino Salinas”, Palermo



Fig. 11: The straight trait of the *Temenos* west of the Sacred Area, and the couple of stone anchors with the offering field all around, Motya VII, Phase 4, 470-397/6 BC

Fig. 12: Egyptian scarab (MC.10.100) in green feldspar, engraved with a Djed pillar surmounted by solar disk with triple Atef crown (Hemhem) flanked by two uraei, within a curb frame, 1.2 x 0.8 x 0.6 cm



Fig. 13: Bronze ring with the face of the Greek apotropaic river deity Acheloos (MC.10.80)



Fig. 14: Sanctuary of the Holy Waters, view from west, Motya VII, Phase 4, 470-397/6 BC. In the foreground the temple *in antis* C11/C7



Fig. 15: Temple C11/C7, Motya VII, Phase 4, 470-397/6 BC



Fig. 16: Stone offering slab at the north-eastern corner of the Temple C7



Fig. 17: *Krater* of Alkimedon representing a scene of symposium (side A) and the farewell traveler (side B), with the detail of the inscription [...].KLES ALKIMEDON. Attic Red-Figured bell-*krater*, ca. 425 BC

Fig. 18: Cast and clay matrix (MC.13.45) of a female goddess with *polos* from the Sanctuary of the Holy Waters, late 6th-early 5th cent. BCE



Fig. 19: Mold for arulae (MC.13.100) found in the Sanctuary of the Holy Waters showing a sphinx dominating a crouching naked young man

