

**AMERICAN EXCAVATIONS AT MORGANTINA
SOUTH BATHS AND WEST SANCTUARY
PROJECT**

**July---August 2014 Season Preliminary Report Sandra
K. Lucore and Monika Trümper, co---directors**

This was the second season of a three---year project located in Contrada Agnese that focuses on the complete excavation of the South Baths, a Greek bathing complex dated to the third century BCE, and the adjacent West Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone. Both buildings were discovered and partially excavated in 1971, and were briefly investigated in 2004, 2005, and 2009; with more formal excavation of the South Baths undertaken again in 2010. The 2014 excavations were directed by Sandra K. Lucore and Monika Trümper, and the project was generously funded by grants from the Loeb Classical Library Foundation and the Gerda Henkel Foundation. The staff included Henry K. Sharp, field supervisor of the South Baths; Italo Giordano, supervisor of the West Sanctuary; Giancarlo Filantropi, draftsman; Shelley C. Stone, ceramicist; and Karen Abend, conservator. Student volunteer Eleni Gizas (Bryn Mawr College) assisted Karen and served as the project registrar. The excavation team consisted of American, Canadian, German, and Italian student volunteers: Dakota Jackson (Bryn Mawr College), Eleni Gizas (Bryn Mawr College), Emma Buckingham (University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill), Timothy Shea (Duke University), Susan Grouchy (University of Western Ontario), Todd Caissie (Rutgers University), Neele Theunert (Freie Universität Berlin), Charlene Hartisch (FUB), Annegret Klünker (FUB), Alica Ioannou (FUB), Thomas Heide (FUB), Marc Lecloux (FUB), Emilia Trovato (University of Catania), Roberta Castronuovo (University of Pisa), and Alessandra Andreocci (University of Rome/La Sapienza). Three local residents of Aidone were contracted to work with the team on most days: Filippo Campanello, Bruno Cristiano, and Gaetano Caniolo.

The project was generously funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation and the Loeb Classical Library Foundation.

GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG



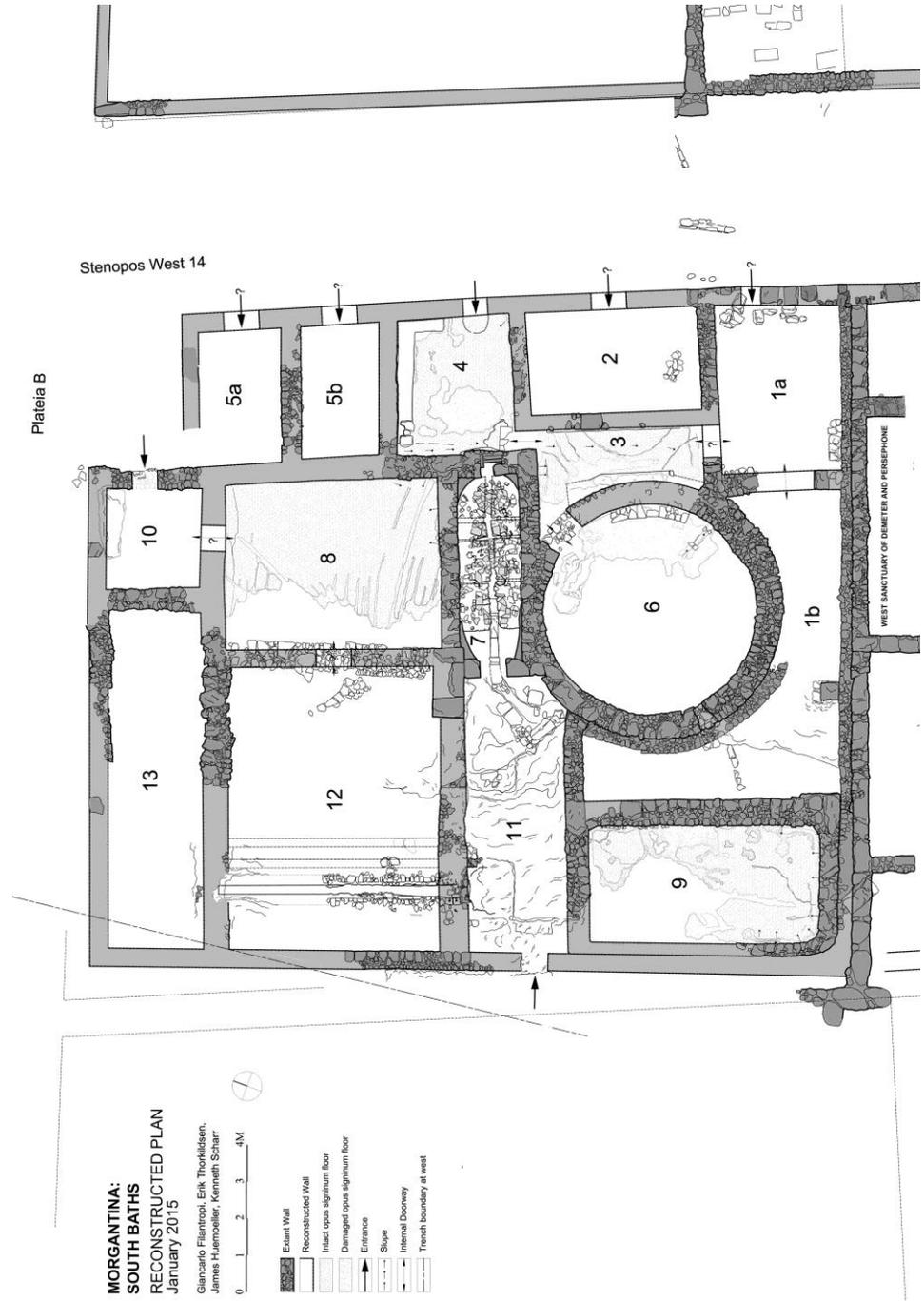
Loeb Classical Library Foundation



2014 excavation team: L-R, back: E. Buckingham, T. Heide, M. Lecloux, R. Castronuovo, S. Stone, G. Filantropi, T. Shea, H. Sharp; L-R, middle: S. K. Lucore, G. Caniolo, S. Grouchy, N. Theunert, E. Gizas, D. Jackson, C. Hartisch, A. Klünker, M. Trümper; L-R, front: F. Campanello, A. Andreocci, I. Giordano, E. Trovato

Our second season focused first on the complete excavation of the South Baths complex, located at the intersection of Plateia B and Stenopos 14 West. Our aim was to reveal all rooms and features that had not been completely excavated in 2013: a large room in the NE (5), the little known area in the NW (now 12 and 13), the furnace (7) below the level of the secondary cooking oven found in its eastern half last year, and the praefurnium/service area to the W of the furnace (now 11). The second focus was to identify the extent and plan of the West Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone that is located immediately to the S of the South Baths.

The South Baths are located across the ancient intersection from the contemporary North Baths. The building is much less well preserved than its northern counterpart, owing to conditions of the natural topography, but especially as a result of reuse and spoliation of the building in antiquity and intensive agricultural deep plowing in modern times. The deep ruts visible in the *opus signinum* floor are vivid evidence of why very little survives above foundation level; in fact, the most extensive and most significant evidence was uncovered in areas cut in the bedrock below ground level, where the plow could not reach (furnace 7 and service area 11; hypocaust in room 12). These conditions notwithstanding, full excavation of the South Baths yielded extraordinary results. The baths occupy one standard lot of the orthogonal city plan of about 17.50 x 17.50 m, and their plan now consists of 14 rooms (numbered, for now, 1-4, 5a, 5b, 6-13).



The results of this season confirm that the bath building conforms to standards of Greek public baths in Sicily and South Italy, providing two separate and distinct bathing sections: a cleansing section that includes a tholos with hip-bathtubs (6), a small entrance room with bench (4) and a connecting corridor with bench (3); and a luxury bathing section, whose defining features were fully excavated and identified this year. The latter section includes a small entrance room (10) with a ramp-like threshold, entered from a small square in the NE of the building lot; a large distributive room (8); and a large room with a communal heated immersion pool (12), of which only the bottom of the hypocaust channel and a small section of the plastered entrance step survive. Both bathing wings of the complex were served by the large central bottle-shaped furnace (7), which, after removal of the secondary cooking oven, yielded conclusive evidence for the much-debated reconstruction of an intricate heating system: 8 platforms supported four roughly round built structures, which in turn carried four containers for heating water. The *praefurnium* and service area to the W of the furnace (11) was accessible only from an as yet unidentified space in the W. The bedrock floor was trimmed to descend gradually towards the firing chamber, with several steps from W to E, and it served not only to access and work the large furnace, but also to access and work the semi-circular *testudo*/hypocaust of the immersion pool, located at the NW corner of the service area.

While the South Baths share with the North Baths central features such as the double circulation system and the general organization of the bathing program, they also include a series of shops and related rooms, which, however, did not communicate directly with the bathing spaces of the complex: room 1, the area W of the tholos which was probably a storage space for the shops; rooms 2, 5a, 5b, and 13, which was probably subdivided into several smaller rooms. These shops can be identified from their earthen floors and, at least in the case of rooms 5a and 5b, the high number of coins (esp. half coins) found in them. The presence of shops is not typical of the Western Greek public baths, but they are also found in the bath building located adjacent to the agora at Megara Hyblaea.

The similarity of the South Baths and North Baths raises again the question why two such buildings were built in proximity to each other at roughly the same time – a situation that remains unique in the entire Mediterranean. Perhaps the building was less extensively decorated than the North Baths, although further analysis of particular extant details (e.g. the *opus signinum* floors) could clarify this. Whether or not the South Baths included rooms with tubular dome and/or vaults remains an open question; however, the extremely poor state of preservation of the building in general could explain the fact that only a few fragments of vaulting tubes were found in excavations, and none in situ. And in the case of room 12, for example, the most innovative and luxurious bathing room in the complex, where one could expect vaulting, the walls are thick enough to have supported a vaulted roof. If each bath had been differentiated, to cater to a different clientele, there is currently no evidence to indicate how precisely bathers were differentiated, by gender, social status, financial circumstances, or any other criteria. The presence of shops in the South Baths distinguishes this complex from the North Baths, and their entrances on Stenopos 14 West suggest that they might have functioned in relation to the large, probably public building located on the opposite side of the street (for more on this building see the report by Alex Walthall on the 2014 Contrada Agnese Project (a separate project, also located in Contrada Agnese) in this newsletter). Further exploration of the surroundings may provide additional clues to the specific functions of one or both of the baths. For investigation of the West Sanctuary to the S of the South Baths, see below.



South Baths, W half: rooms 12 (with hypocaust channel at center right) and 13 in foreground, from N



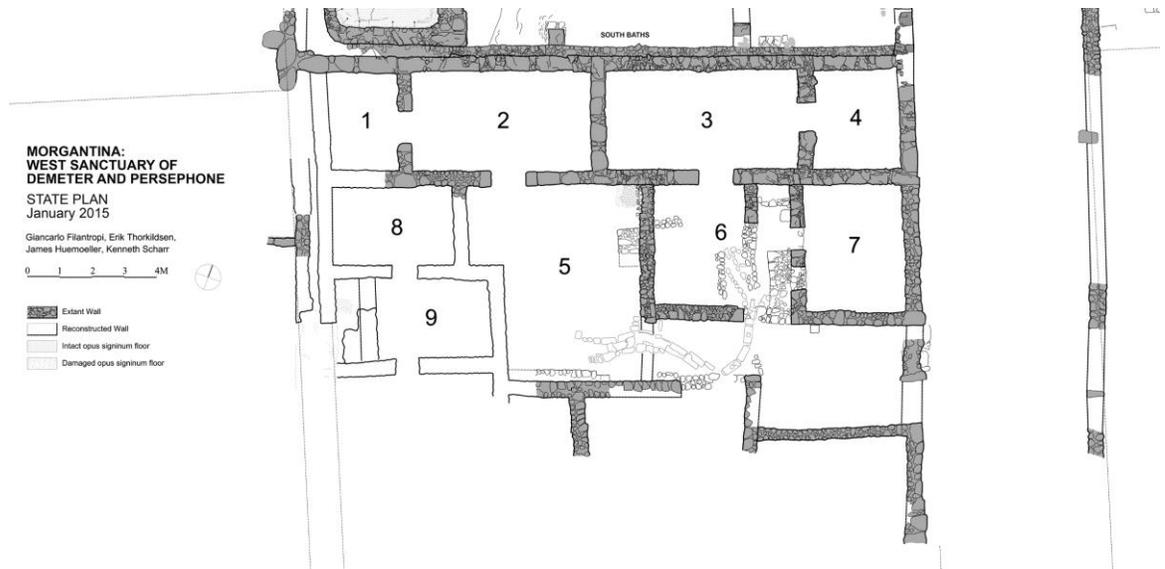
South Baths, room 12 hypocaust channel, with semi-circular remains of *testudo* furnace in foreground, from S



South Baths, furnace 7, from NW



South Baths, furnace 7 E end, detail of two round constructions/supports for water containers, with visible sections of central (E-W) and lateral (N-S) channels between platforms; from N



The West Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone is located south of and adjacent to the South Baths. Current evidence indicates that the sanctuary was constructed and functioning before the South Baths were built, although a more precise chronology of the building is one of the aims of this project. Like the South Baths, the West Sanctuary was discovered by Hubert Allen in 1971, when one room (3) was fully excavated, yielding finds (esp. terracotta figurines) that motivated the identification of this building as a sanctuary. Further exploration in 2004/2005 focused on three rooms (2, 5, 6) all of which had been significantly disturbed by clandestine activity, but still produced fragments of a large decorated terracotta altar, which further substantiated the identification of the building as sanctuary. This year's campaign concentrated on the complete excavation of room 6, where undisturbed areas remained, and on identifying the extent and plan of rooms that had not yet been identified by the previous projects.

Room 6 yielded a most intriguing result: a dense sequence of several different floor levels, which is currently unparalleled in Hellenistic Morgantina; some of these were combined with structures (bench, platform, altar?) that probably were used for cultic purposes. While one of the lower floor levels included a coin from about 310-270 BCE (Find 46, VI 31-6.53, Bucket 25; cf. MS II #436), no other evidence was found that securely date the many changes above this floor level, particularly to before or after 211 BCE.

Currently, 9 rooms have been securely identified, of which two in the western part include small structures paved with *opus signinum* in their corners, located at a high level (immediately below topsoil). Cleaning of the western exterior wall revealed that construction continued further west, extending over and beyond the presumed ambitus. The 2015 season will focus on the complete excavation of the newly identified rooms (7, 8, 9) and on further exploration of the as yet unknown southern extension of the sanctuary.

The end of the campaign was overshadowed by clandestine intervention in the night before the last day of excavation. The clandestine diggers came with metal detectors and made holes in seven locations, in one case even cutting through the well preserved *opus signinum* floor of room 4 of the South Baths. In order to prevent further damage, we backfilled parts of the South Baths (esp. furnace 7 and hypocaust channel in room 12) and all unexcavated rooms of the West Sanctuary (1, 4, 7-9). Security was further enhanced in the area of the South Baths and West Sanctuary by the reinstallation of the security lights.



West Sanctuary, room 6, NE corner, at the beginning of the campaign, from S



West Sanctuary, room 6, overview at the end of the campaign, from SW



West Sanctuary, overview from NE



Thomas Heide (r.) giving a trench tour in the South Baths



Alessandra Andreocci (middle) giving a trench tour in the West Sanctuary



Karen Abend in the conservation lab