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Preliminary Report on the 2014 Field Season of the American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project (CAP)


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Preliminary Report on the 2014 Field Season of the American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project (CAP)

Alex Walthall – Randall Souza – Jared Benton

This article provides a preliminary report on the 2014 excavations carried out by the American Excavations at Morgantina (Sicily): Contrada Agnese Project (CAP). The 2014 season was the second year of this multiyear research and excavation project aimed at investigating both the urban planning of the city and the lives of its residents, with a specific focus on the periods of occupation and cultural transformation from the third to first century BCE. During the second season, three trenches were excavated in the area corresponding to Lot One of the urban insula W13/14S. This preliminary report presents the significant stratigraphic units and material finds encountered in each trench, along with a provisional outline of the phases of activity, setting the developments observed in each trench within the broader historical and archaeological context of the urban center at Morgantina. The discovery of several rooms with similar architectural features suggests that they belong to a single building, the so-called Southeast Building, the function and dimensions of which will be investigated in future CAP excavations.

Introduction

2014 was the second year of the American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project (CAP), a multiyear research and excavation project designed to investigate developments taking place in the Contrada Agnese, a neighborhood located at some remove from the civic center of Morgantina, between the third and first centuries BCE (fig. 1). Excavations were carried out with the permission of the Co-Directors of the American Excavations at Morgantina (AEM), Prof. Malcolm Bell III and Prof. Carla Antonaccio, and in cooperation with Dott.ssa Laura Maniscalco, Director of the Parco Archeologico Regionale di Morgantina, and the Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali e Ambientali di Enna¹.

¹ We would like to thank Prof. Malcolm Bell III and Prof. Carla Antonaccio for giving their permission and constant encouragement to pursue this project. Our thanks also to Dott.ssa Laura Maniscalco, Director of the Parco Archeologico Regionale di Morgantina, for her assistance and support. We are extremely grateful to the Comune and residents of Aidone for their generosity and hospitality. Our work was made possible by generous financial support from the Department of Art & Archaeology at Princeton University. It goes without saying that this work would not be possible without the many volunteers who gave their time, energy, and goodwill to the project. Thanks to Jasmine Akiyama-Kim (Oregon), Savannah Schultz (Oregon), Ryan Franklin (Oregon), Christopher Jelen (Oregon), George Barr (Oregon), Katharine P.D. Huemoeller (Princeton), Giuseppe Castellano (UT), Auschere Caufield (Oregon), Kyle Govan (Oregon), Andrew Tharler (Bryn Mawr), Luke Hollis (Archimedes Digital), Jessica Williams (Harvard), Elizabeth Wueste (Berkeley), Leonid Tsvetkov (Artist at-large), Jennifer Knust (BU), Liam Dearing (VCU), Alex Deland (Aerial Vector). Environmental collection and analysis was conducted by Robyn Veal (Cambridge), Michael MacKinnon (UWinnipeg), Charlie French (Cambridge), Cynthia Larbey (Cambridge), and Diane Lister (Cambridge). Leigh Lieberman (Princeton) was responsible for the development and maintenance of the CAP databases. David Massey (Indiana) and Robert Gorham (UVA) headed the Geospatial team. In the museum, Annie Truetzel (Princeton) and Mali Skotheim (Princeton) were responsible for cataloging and processing finds. Karen Abend (Catania) and Aislinn Smalling (UCL) returned as conservators. Giancarlo Filantropi joined us as draftsman.



Fig. 1. Plan of Morgantina with location of Contrada Agnese and Agora. Drawing by E. Thorkildsen.

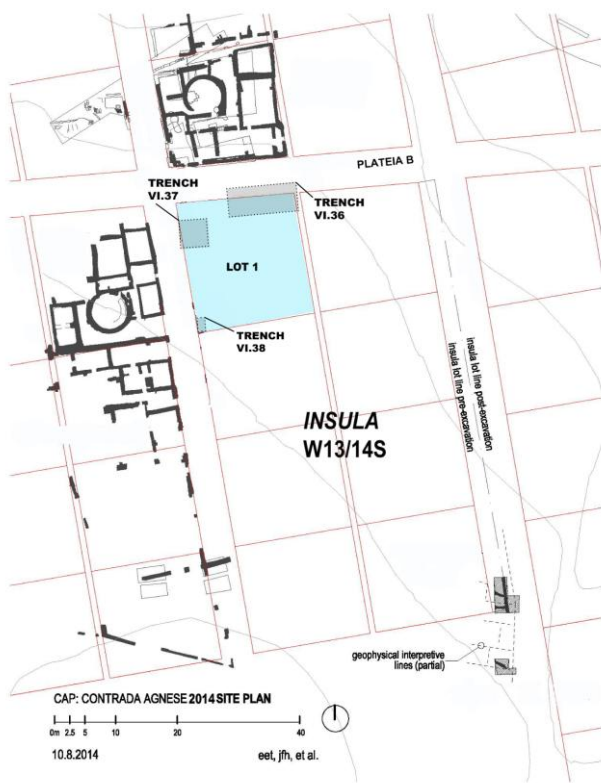


Fig. 2. Plan of the Contrada Agnese with location of trenches; VI.36-38 one indicated in blue. Drawing by E. Thorkildsen and J.F. Huemoeller.

The CAP excavations of 2013 revealed the remains of lightly-built walls and several rooms along the eastern lots of the insula W13/14S, as well as portions of the adjacent road, *stenopos* W13². These remains were found to be heavily damaged by modern activity (a combination of agricultural plowing and clandestine excavations). Discouraged by the poor state of preservation where the bedrock was close to ground level, in 2014 we focused on the northern area of the insula, where the topsoil was thicker and there was an expectation of better preservation. We opened three trenches (VI.36-38) with several research objectives in mind. The underlying objective of the season was to further elucidate the nature of occupation in the Contrada Agnese zone, paying particularly close attention to periods following the fall of Morgantina to Roman forces in 211 BCE (fig. 2). To accomplish this goal, our work focused on the northwest lot (Lot One) of insula W13/14S, where previous excavation had brought to light stretches of walls belonging to a large structure, the so-called Southeast Building (see below for the origin of the name). In 2014, we aimed to reveal details of the Southeast Building's architectural plan by defining both the boundaries of the lot that it occupied and the internal division of space

² For more on the 2013 CAP excavations, see WALTHALL *et al.* 2014 and BENTON *et al.* 2015.

within it³. In so doing, we would learn more about the function and occupation history of the Southeast Building in order to determine how its construction and use fit into the larger Contrada Agnese neighborhood and, in particular, how it related to the nearby North and South Baths⁴.

Nearly all construction activity recorded by previous excavations in the Contrada Agnese has been dated to the third century, much of it to the middle decades of the century. The late third century was a tumultuous period for Sicily and for Morgantina in particular; the Romans captured the city in 211 BCE and settled a group of Iberian mercenaries there⁵. Ongoing excavations have confirmed a major transition in urban life around the turn of the century and have shown that the second-century city had a fundamentally different makeup than its third-century predecessor⁶. The general picture is one in which the city's population, far smaller after 211 BCE, appears to have been concentrated in and around the agora as peripheral areas within the city walls were abandoned. However, since most prior excavation on the Serra Orlando ridge has focused on the agora and the wealthy residential neighborhoods adjacent to it, we are particularly interested in investigating the transitional period of the late third century in one of those peripheral areas.

Previous Excavations in and around the Southeast Building (Lot One)

Prior to the 2014 season, portions of Lot One had been revealed in two previous excavation campaigns in the area. It was evident even before the CAP excavations that a large building had once occupied the lot. Given its location at the southeast corner of the intersection of *plateia* B and *stenopos* W14, previous excavators referred to the structure as the Southeast Building (fig. 2). We have chosen to retain the name for the sake of continuity until we have a better picture of the building's function.

The earliest work to reveal parts of the Southeast Building was conducted in 1970 and 1971, during the excavations that first brought to light the remains of the North and South Baths⁷. Several test trenches dug in those years exposed a stretch of the building's western wall, as well as a portion of an interior space located near the southwest corner of the lot. Questions about the precise location and extent of these trenches led us to partially re-excavate one of these earlier test trenches in 2014 as Trench VI.38. The results of this work are discussed below.

More significant work was done in 2004 and 2005, when excavations along *plateia* B exposed the northern façade of the Southeast Building. These excavations revealed several distinctive architectural features, including, most notably, a feature identified as a bench running along the exterior of the building. This rubble feature, built against the larger, dressed stones of the building's northern façade, stretched for at least 11.2m. Elements of comparable construction and dimension – readily identifiable as benches – are found inside the North Bath complex just across *plateia* B (fig. 3). If correctly identified, this exterior bench is a unique feature at Morgantina, which raises questions about its function and location, including whether it served the Southeast Building or the North Baths across the *plateia*. The bench flanks the building's one surviving entrance along the *plateia* creating another distinctive feature, a re-entrant bay in which the entryway is set back some 45cm from the street⁸. Against the western re-entrant angle, excavators found a small, plaster-lined

³ On lot division at Morgantina, see BELL 2008: 155-156.

⁴ For excavation of the North and South Baths, see PR XI, 370-82; LUCORE 2009, 2013; LUCORE and TRÜMPER, forthcoming.

⁵ Liv. 24.36.10. For the archaeological evidence associated with the Roman siege of 211 BCE, see BUTTREY 1965; 1979.

⁶ For a concise summary of historical events at Morgantina, see MS VI, 13-17.

⁷ Plans of the Contrada Agnese with the portions of Lot One exposed in 1971 can be found in PR XI: 373-374, ills. 11 and 12.

⁸ It is possible that there was a second entrance along the northern façade, which gave access to a small room located at the northwest corner of the building. Today, this section of the northern wall appears to be largely missing with some stones apparently wrenched out of place, perhaps the work of stone robbers.

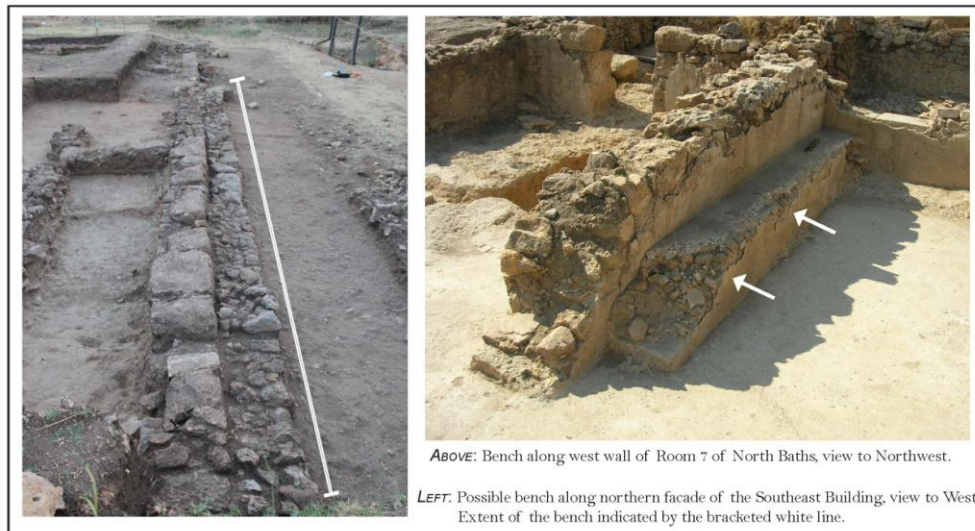


Fig. 3. Photograph of the bench-like feature along Plateia B and photograph of bench in North Baths.



Fig. 4. Photograph of threshold made of broken terracotta bricks, view to South.

basin (45cm x 65cm), partially carved into the limestone bedrock. Together, these features offer clues as to the building's general character and scale but give little indication of its specific function or date.

Work inside the building during the 2004 and 2005 seasons was limited to a 2m wide by 11m long swath across the northern end of the lot, stretching from the north-west corner of the building to a point just beyond the east end of the entrance. Excavations in these two seasons exposed two rooms along the north side of the building with a pithos apparently *in situ* in each, but did not reach deposits deep enough to produce other evidence for understanding the function of these spaces. The larger of the two rooms lay close to the central axis of the building and was accessed from *plateia* B through the re-entrant entryway.

Here, excavators stopped at the level of a threshold formed by terracotta bricks set within the plastered jambs of the entrance (fig. 4).

While further excavation is required to address questions of phasing, it bears mention that the replacement of stone threshold blocks with terracotta bricks is a phenomenon observed elsewhere at Morgantina, often occurring in instances where post-211 BCE spoliation and reoccupation has occurred. The entryway itself, located between trenches VI.36 and VI.37, will be the object of future CAP excavations.

Trench VI.36

Trench 36 was sited along *plateia* B and covered an area 10m x 6m in the northeast quadrant of Lot One (figs. 2, 5, 6). It ran 6m north-south, extending ca. 2m into *plateia* B and ca. 4m into the interior of the Southeast Building. Its eastern boundary lay at the theoretical eastern edge of Lot One, just beyond the projected line of the *ambitus* that would have originally run along the long axis of the *insula* and divided the

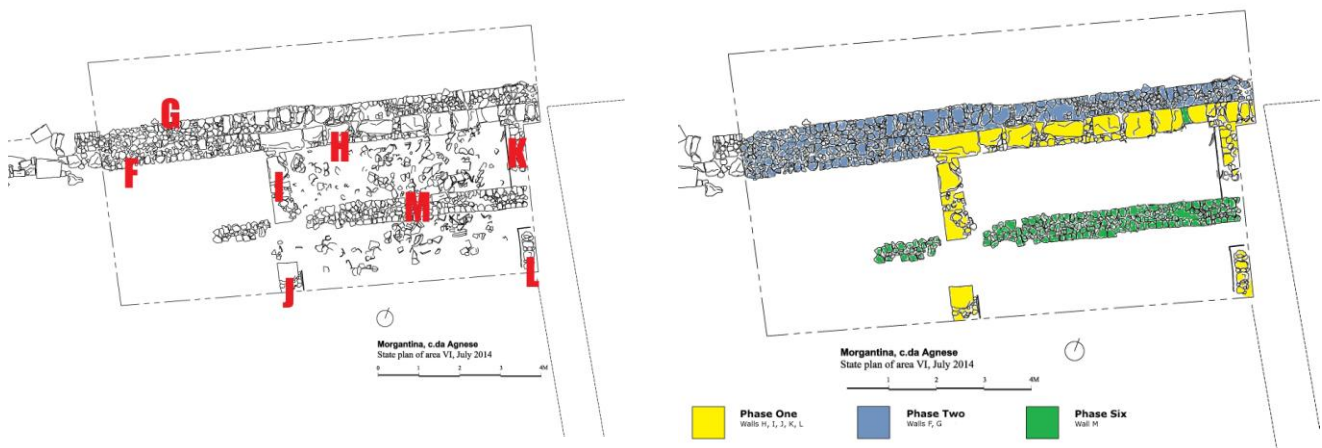


Fig. 5. Plan of Trench 36 with walls labeled. Drawing by G. Filantropi.

Fig. 6. Plan of Trench 36 with construction phases indicated.

eastern and western lots. This line was obtained by extrapolation from the *ambitus* that ran along the east side of the North Baths across *plateia* B.

Excavation in Trench VI.36 revealed a number of architectural features that can be broadly divided into three phases: One (primary construction), Two (secondary construction), and Six (tertiary construction) (fig. 6). No construction trenches were discovered in 2014, so walls have been initially phased in a relative chronology, though we did reach what we believe to be a portion of a *terra battuta* floor belonging to phase Two. Stratigraphic excavation revealed a number of other phases (Three, Four, and Five) during which construction did not occur, but with abundant evidence for the nature and dating of occupation, abandonment, and reuse.

Phase One – Primary Construction (3rd century BCE?)

The oldest construction in Trench 36 is a group of walls built with large squared blocks: H, I, J, and, probably, K and L (fig. 5). Because the foundations of these walls were not reached during the 2014 excavations, we have no evidence to establish their absolute date and instead rely on the relative chronology derived from the sequencing of their construction. Wall H was laid first, and Walls I and K abut it. Walls J and L are likely contemporaneous features, as they align with Walls I and K to form the outline of a rectangular room. Doorways were located between Walls I and J and between Walls K and L. The consistent use of large stones for the construction of Walls H, I, and J (and possibly Walls K and L) may suggest that these were all part of a single construction. If so, we might tentatively date this phase to first half of the third century BCE, particularly if parallels are drawn to the initial phases of construction at the nearby North Bath complex, which are securely dated on the basis of ceramic and numismatic evidence to the second quarter of the third century BCE⁹. No evidence recovered from Trench 36 would produce a date for this initial construction any earlier than the third century BCE.

Each wall has large, roughly-worked stones creating an exterior face, while the interior face is made from small stones inserted between the large stones, a technique characteristic of wall construction at Morgantina. All the interior faces preserve white plaster treatments, and while none of the exterior faces appear to have

⁹ On the date of the North Baths, see LUCORE 2013: 160.

been plastered, further excavation is required to confirm our initial observation. The overall dimensions of the room were not fully revealed in 2014. Moreover, the small amount of Wall H extending beyond the corner with Wall I suggested that the room may have actually been part of a larger structure that predated the major construction of Phase Two. Only parts of this early structure remain extant because it seems that Lot One was the site of considerable later modifications that removed, displaced, and reused materials from the original structure. Wall H clearly continues east across the projected line of the *ambitus* that ran north of *plateia* B along the eastern side of the North Baths. If an *ambitus* did exist east of Lot One during this early phase of construction, we can say that it was not in line with the *ambitus* of the insula that lies immediately to the north.

Phase Two – Secondary Construction (3rd century BCE)



Fig. 7. Third-century BCE juglet (inv. 14-303).

Significant construction or rebuilding occurred at some point after the construction of the large-stone walls of Phase One. The date of this second phase is difficult to assess, in part because the foundations of the walls were not fully excavated; but on the basis of stratigraphy, the small-stone walls that characterize Phase Two all conclusively post-date the larger-stone walls of Phase One. Indeed, it is very probable that both the first and second construction phases occurred in short succession.

The walls of Phase Two are constructed from small stones set in mud mortar and lack the large semi-dressed blocks that characterized Phase One. Wall F may be an extension to Wall H along the lot's northern edge, or a rebuilding of an older wall on the same line. Some time later, Wall G (the "bench" discussed above) was built abutting walls H and F. Here it is worth noting that no surface was ever found on the top of Wall G to corroborate the hypothesis that the feature was a bench. If Wall H was in need of repair, then Wall G might have been a buttress added to shore up an unstable structure. A mostly unexcavated circle of rubble is the only stratigraphic deposit possibly belonging to Phase Two, and the only diagnostic evidence excavated from this layer is a terracotta juglet datable to the third century (fig. 7).

Phase Three – Occupation (to the end of the 3rd century BCE)

Phase Three consists of features and strata that were created just before the destruction and temporary abandonment of the building. A brown soil layer, which may be the beaten-earth floor of the room, was found just below a thick layer of terracotta roof tiles (fig. 8). While we uncovered soil layers below the packed-earth floor that could suggest earlier phases of occupation, we did not excavate them out of concerns about the depth of the trench in this area. Eleven bronze coins, mostly from the mint of Syracuse, were recovered from the beaten-earth floor or in the soil layer that had accumulated directly above it. The most significant of these coins was a Roman semilibral *sextans* (fig. 9) found in the beaten-earth surface, which may establish a *terminus post quem* of c. 211-208 BCE for the conclusion of Phase Three¹⁰. The late date of the soil layer and its direct relationship with the roof collapse confirm that Phase Three represents the final occupation of Lot

¹⁰ Inv. 14-268. AE, Ø 20.89mm, 6.05g; O/ Head of Mercury, r.; R/ Prow r.; above, ear of grain stalk; KA before, ROMA in exergue. Rome, Sicilian mint; *sextans* 211-208 BCE. *RRC* 69/6a.



Fig. 8. Packed earth floor in Trench 36, view to East.



Fig. 10. Tile collapse with pithos in Trench 36, view to East.



14-268

Fig. 9. Bronze coin. Rome Sicilian mint; sextans 211-208 BCE (inv. 14-268).

One before the destruction and abandonment of the Southeast Building. It may be that Phase Three ended with the sack of Morgantina in 211 BCE, however it could have ended shortly thereafter, since there were no indications that the roof collapsed from destruction by fire, as has been found to be the case in other areas of the city that suffered violence in 211 BCE.

A largely intact pithos found sitting upright on its base against the eastern edge of the trench belongs to Phase Three. The top of the pithos protruded up through the layer of collapsed roof tiles and was evidently damaged by a falling stone (fig. 10). The contents of the pithos were left unexcavated, given time constraints of the season. Pithos fragments belonging to a different vessel were found

nearby, some of which were held together by lead clamps. Two other pithoi had been found in 2004 in the northernmost rooms of Lot One, making this discovery particularly interesting and suggesting that at one point the northern rooms of the building were been used for storage in some capacity. Pithoi have been found throughout Morgantina in both domestic and commercial settings, though, so we cannot use the mere presence of pithoi here to draw firm conclusions about the character of our building.

Phase Four – Destruction and Abandonment (Final decade of the 3rd or early 2nd century BCE)

Phase Four is characterized by abandonment, destruction, and disuse. Above the brown-soil stratum that probably represents the latest packed-earth floor of Phase Three was a layer of roof tiles ca. 20cm thick (fig. 10). Shortly after the collapse of the tiles, some parts of the walls were damaged as indicated by the large stones found on top of the tile layer (fig. 11). One of these stones had a ca. 10cm by 10cm notch cut into it, possibly for a door jamb (fig. 12)¹¹.

¹¹ For thresholds at Morgantina, see KYLLINGSTAD, SJÖQVIST 1965: 25 fig. 2.



Fig. 11. North section through Trench 36 with stones shaded in yellow. Drawing by G. Filantropi.



Fig. 12. Stone with notch from rubble layer in Trench 36.

A period of disuse followed the collapse of the roof and partial destruction of the walls, leading to the accumulation of a thick layer of light-yellow soil, characteristic of periods of abandonment on the Serra Orlando. The absence of stones in the soil suggests that the walls were largely still standing, a hypothesis corroborated by the high concentration of wall plaster found mixed within the soil, which must have started falling off the walls once the interior of the building was exposed to the elements. A date around 200 BCE would be consistent with the interpretation of the layer as an accumulation during a period of disuse; while only natural processes were operating, no new material would be deposited within the walls of the structure.

On top of the yellowish soil was a concentration of stones, probably collapsed from the walls, on top of which more yellowish soil accumulated. The yellowish soil above and below the rocks was identical in all respects. We believe that both soil layers were deposited by the same continuous and likely natural processes (e.g. wind or erosion) that could now affect the interior of the roofless room. While this second, higher layer of yellowish soil was being deposited, some part of the walls was clearly still standing because concentrations of wall plaster were again found in the soil. The datable ceramic material from this stratum belongs primarily to the third century BCE, again supporting the hypothesis that the soil accumulated naturally.

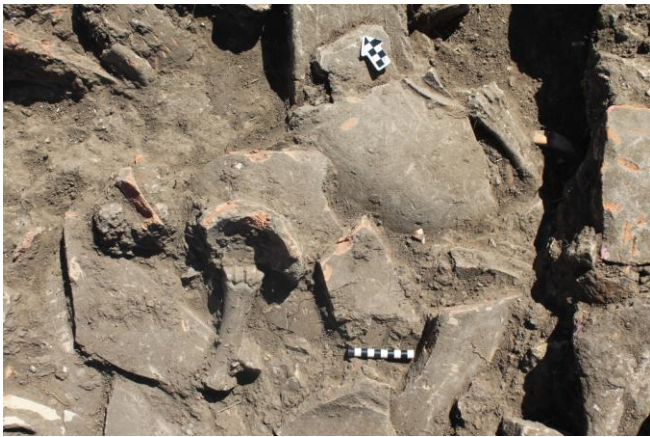


Fig. 13. Detail of rubble leveling fill (Phase Five) in Trench 36.



Fig. 14. Bronze spur (inv. 14-148).

Phase Five – Addition of a Leveling Fill (Final decade of the 3rd or early 2nd century BCE)

The destruction debris and the accumulations of soil created an uneven surface that found its nadir along the central north-south axis of the room. Following the collapse of the roof, the accumulation of yellow soil, and the deterioration of the walls, this depression at the center of the room was filled with rubble (fig. 13). The matrix of the rubble consisted primarily of stones, tiles, and pottery, but a variety of other materials was also found mixed within, including animal bones, an iron blade, an iron key, a discoid loom weight, two pieces of a plaster triglyph, fragments of three terracotta altars, four lead pot menders, four fragmentary lamps, five coins, fragments of five terracotta figurines, and at least thirty-five iron nails. Diagnostic material found among this rubble layer includes a third-century bronze horse spur (fig. 14) and the lower half of a terracotta figurine of a standing female that dates to the second quarter of the third century BCE (fig. 15)¹². Among the numismatic material recovered, the most notable is a bronze coin struck by a Carthaginian mint operating either at Akragas or at Morgantina itself during the brief garrisoning of the city between 212 and 211 BCE (fig. 16)¹³. A human mandible, belonging to a



Fig. 15. Terracotta Figurine (inv. 14-220).

¹² On bronze horse spurs of this type from Olympia, see BAITINGER 2004. For the terracotta figurine, see *MS I*, pl. 79, n. 374.

¹³ Inv. 14-104. AE, Ø 22.02mm, 9.27g, 270°. O/ Head of Demeter, r.; R/ Horse running r.; below, Punic letter *het*; behind, palm. Morgantina, c. 212-211 BCE. *MS II* 446, *SNGCop* 381. The attribution of this series to Morgantina, first made by Buttrey *et al.* in *MS II*, has been recently expanded by López-Sánchez (2010), who connects these coins with the garrisoning of the city by the Numidian military commander, Mottones. Burnett (1983: 5-6; 1995), on the other hand, assigns these coins, along with a silver series of similar iconography, to a Carthaginian mint operating at Akragas between 213 and 210 BCE.



Fig. 16. Bronze coin. Mint of Morgantina or Akragas; 212–211 BCE (inv. 14-104).



Fig. 17. Human mandible from Trench 36.



Fig. 18. Vaulting tubes from North Baths found in rubble from Trench 36.

young adult (20 to 35 years old) and probably a male, was found within the rubble layer and independent of any other human remains (fig. 17)¹⁴. The CAP environmental team identified a variety of organic remains in the soil samples floated from the rubble, isolating cereals, olive pits, grape seeds, and possibly the pit of a larger fruit.

Among the various inclusions within the rubble fill were a number of pithos fragments, clearly from multiple vessels. Analysis of the ceramic evidence from the rubble in general revealed that there were many worn, ancient breaks with few joins. These findings imply that the rubble was a secondary deposit, since, in a primary deposit, one would expect there to be fresher breaks and a higher percentage of joins¹⁵. Although the rubble of Phase Five may have been deposited over a long

time, the ceramic evidence suggests that it was intentionally moved from one location to another. The rubble rested directly below new construction (Wall M), suggesting that it may have served as a leveling fill or even a sort of foundation.

The rubble also contained a few fragmentary ceramic vaulting tubes (fig. 18). At Morgantina, vaulting tubes are only known from the North Baths, where they comprised the dome and barrel vaults for the ceilings of rooms 5, 8, and 9¹⁶. Excavators of the North Bath complex have suggested that the vaults may have collapsed as the result of an earthquake that reportedly struck central Sicily around the year 180 BCE. Although this hypothesis remains unconfirmed, if correct, it would indicate a date in the middle of the second century for Phases Five and Six. If these fragmentary vaulting tubes did in fact come from the North Baths, their presence shows that the materials collected to form the rubble leveling fill originated nearby. Furthermore, it suggests that the rubble was likely deposited after the collapse of the vaults in the North Baths, which is helpful in harmonizing construction phases within the Contrada Agnese area and at Morgantina in general.

¹⁴ We would like to thank Dr. Carrie Sulosky-Weaver for her osteological analysis and expertise.

¹⁵ DE SENA, RIVELLA 2004: 369. Catherine Baker (U Cincinnati), CAP ceramics-team supervisor, organized and analyzed the evidence, reaching the conclusion that the rubble was a secondary deposit. Caroline Cheung (UC Berkeley) arrived at a similar conclusion based on her initial analysis of the pithos fragments.

¹⁶ LUCORE 2013: 160-72.

On top of the rubble was a yellowish-brown soil layer, which ran under the later wall from Phase Six (M) but extended over Walls K and L, meaning that these walls had been demolished before the soil was deposited. The absolute date for the deposition of this soil layer (and the associated razing of Walls K and L) remains in question, but a Roman Republican *semis* (fig. 19) provides a *terminus post quem* of 211 BCE, corroborating the evidence from Phase Three and suggesting an even later date, possibly in the second century BCE, for Phases Five and Six¹⁷.



Fig. 19. Bronze coin. Mint of Rome, *semis*; 211–208 BCE (inv. 14-48).

Phase Six – Tertiary Construction (Final decade of the 3rd and later)

Phase Six is a construction phase, characterized by the modification of existing architecture and the addition of a wall of poor quality. Phase Six could not have occurred earlier than the end of the third century BCE but could date to any time after that period. A late wall (M) was built into the yellowish-brown soil layer that lies over top of the rubble deposited in Phase Five. Only one course of Wall M was found, so it may be that we possess only the foundation of a wall which was built in perishable materials or whose upper courses have not survived. In either case, any floor surface associated with it would have been nearly at modern ground level and thus vulnerable to erasure by modern cultivation of the field. The wall itself may be significantly later than the end of the third century, but a modern date is unlikely. Wall M was built directly atop ancient deposits, and even though the wall was heavily damaged by later agricultural activity, it still respects the much earlier walls, such as wall H, which were no longer extant in later periods.

The common alignment of walls M and H may suggest that some internal space did exist during Phase Six. Walls M and H defined a narrow area that could have been roofed, and a large brick was added on top of Wall H, possibly to form a step or threshold for a new door through the wall (fig. 3). Bricks do appear as construction material in walls at Morgantina, but typically in modifications or rebuilding activities postdating 211 BCE, which reused a miscellany of available materials. Wall H is an early construction certainly dating to the third century BCE when the use of a brick fragment would be incongruous. Moreover, as mentioned above, in a later phase a brick threshold was added where walls E and F meet (fig. 4); the similarities between that threshold and the brick in wall H led us to hypothesize that the brick in this trench was a late alteration to the space and possibly comprised a threshold or a step. Any such structure would be mostly conjectural, but with more evidence for late construction in the Contrada Agnese we may be able to discern the purpose of these interventions or find similar structures that are better preserved.

¹⁷ Inv. 14-48. AE, Ø 28.24mm, 13.01g, 270°. O/ Laureate head of Saturn, r.; behind, denominational mark; R/ Prow r.; below, ROMA; above, ear of grain and denominational mark. Rome; *semis*, 211-208 BCE; Variant of RRC 69/3.

Observations

Trench 36 contributed to our understanding of the Southeast building, but it also led us to question some of our previous understanding of the area. The pithoi found in 2004, though left unexcavated *in situ*, had already hinted that storage or production was taking place in the Southeast Building. The 2014 excavations revealed another mostly intact pithos and fragments of several more, strengthening our conviction that the building was in fact being used for production or storage. It remains unclear whether this activity was commercial or domestic in nature. The intact pithos was not excavated for logistical reasons, but we plan to fully excavate the vessel and its contents in a future season and hope that analysis of its contents might yield information about what was being stored or produced in the building.

Trench 36 also yielded some possible evidence for post-211 BCE occupation in the area of the Contrada Agnese. Wall M suggests a late construction phase, possibly dating to the second century BCE. Still, the paucity of second-century material, especially when compared to the abundance of third-century evidence, suggests a marked decline in activity from the third to the second century BCE.

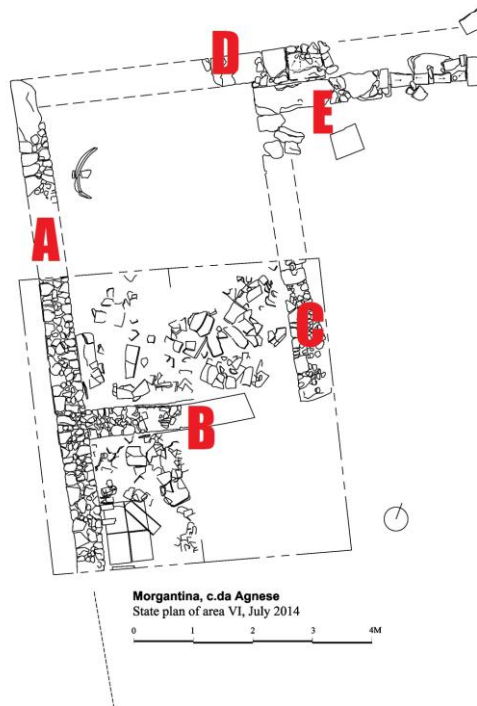


Fig. 20. Plan of Trench 37 with walls labeled. Drawing by G. Filantropi.

Trench VI.37

Trench 37 was located near the northwest corner of the insula (W 13/14 South), ultimately covering a 5m x 5m square that shared one side with the insula's western wall (fig. 2). Previous excavations in 2004 had exposed part of the room occupying the northwest corner of the insula, which included a pithos embedded in the floor, and one objective of Trench 37 was to more fully investigate that room. A baulk ca. 1 m wide was left between the southern scarp of the previous excavation and the northern edge of Trench 37.

Excavation in Trench 37 revealed the continuation of the insula's western wall (A) as well as two walls (B and C) internal to the building (fig. 20). In the northern half of the trench, corresponding likely to the northwest room of the building, a thick deposit lying below a tile collapse was exposed and partially excavated; in the southern half of the trench, corresponding to another room, excavation reached a thick deposit of destruction debris. We did not reach the foundations of any of the three walls (A, B, or C), so these remain the oldest features in the trench though we cannot yet assign them an absolute date. We also did not find conclusive evidence of construction that can be placed in the Phase One identified in Trench 36. On the basis of construction technique, the walls in this trench are tentatively attributed to Phase Two of the building's occupation, though they may well turn out to belong with Phase One.



Fig. 21. Photo of possible floor in Trench 37, view to Northwest.

Phase Two - Construction and articulation of interior space (3rd century BCE)

In Trench 36, construction in Phase One consisted of the long northern wall of the insula (H) along with two shorter N-S walls running south from it (I and K). These walls were built of large stones (up to ca. 70cm in length) and were plastered on the interior faces. In Phase Two additions to and extensions of these walls were built in smaller stones on the same alignment with the earlier construction, though without clear evidence of a plaster treatment. The walls A, B, and C in Trench 37 were all built using medium and small stones without apparently any of the large squared blocks of Phase One. The faces of walls B and C were covered in a fine white plaster, similar to that found on the walls in Trench

36, as was the interior face of wall A. The exterior face of wall A, on the other hand, received a thick coat of grayish-white plaster, perhaps precisely because it was an exterior surface. Since we want to be cautious in linking phases across unexcavated portions of the building, we provisionally assign walls A, B, and C in Trench 37 to Phase Two of the building's construction.

No definite floor or use layer for this phase was found. However, clandestine digging that occurred before the beginning of the 2015 season did expose a possible floor level in the room north of wall B (hereafter "the northern room"; the room south of wall B is "the southern room"). Once we had cleaned the pit dug by the looters, it was possible to see that the plaster on the interior faces of walls B and C was only preserved down to a consistent level not far below the bottom of the tile collapse (ca. 602.40 masl), supporting the hypothesis that the clandestine looters had dug through the room's *terra battuta* floor. The courses which continued below this level were presumably the wall's foundations. In fact, on wall C, the plaster gives way to a foundation course of large stones that protrude outward from the face of the wall, supporting the hypothesis that the bottom of the plaster could have been at floor level. It should be noted that stones and bedrock do occasionally protrude into plastered and otherwise finely decorated spaces at Morgantina, as can be seen in the North Baths. Still, the balance of the current evidence clearly suggests that this was a floor level.

South of wall B, a plaster or fine mortar preparation lay nearly horizontally against a plaster facing on the wall. While both deposits were extremely fragile, it was clear that the nearly horizontal deposit abuts the wall facing, so it is just possible that it was a preparation for a floor surface or a floor surface in itself (fig. 21). However, the slope of the deposit and its higher elevation adjacent to the wall is consistent with an accumulation of plaster falling off the wall, so the true floor in this room may lie further below. It was not possible to completely define the deposit and thereby identify it, though future work may answer this question. If wall B is to be placed in Phase Two, then this potential floor may belong to that phase as well.

Phase Three - Occupation and minor additions (to the end of the 3rd century BCE)

Evidence for occupation was found only in the southern room, where a thick dark brown layer of debris, including charcoal, bone, shell and a small amount of ceramic material was deposited over the potential plaster floor. Three knucklebones and an iron knife were recovered from this deposit, which we interpret as the

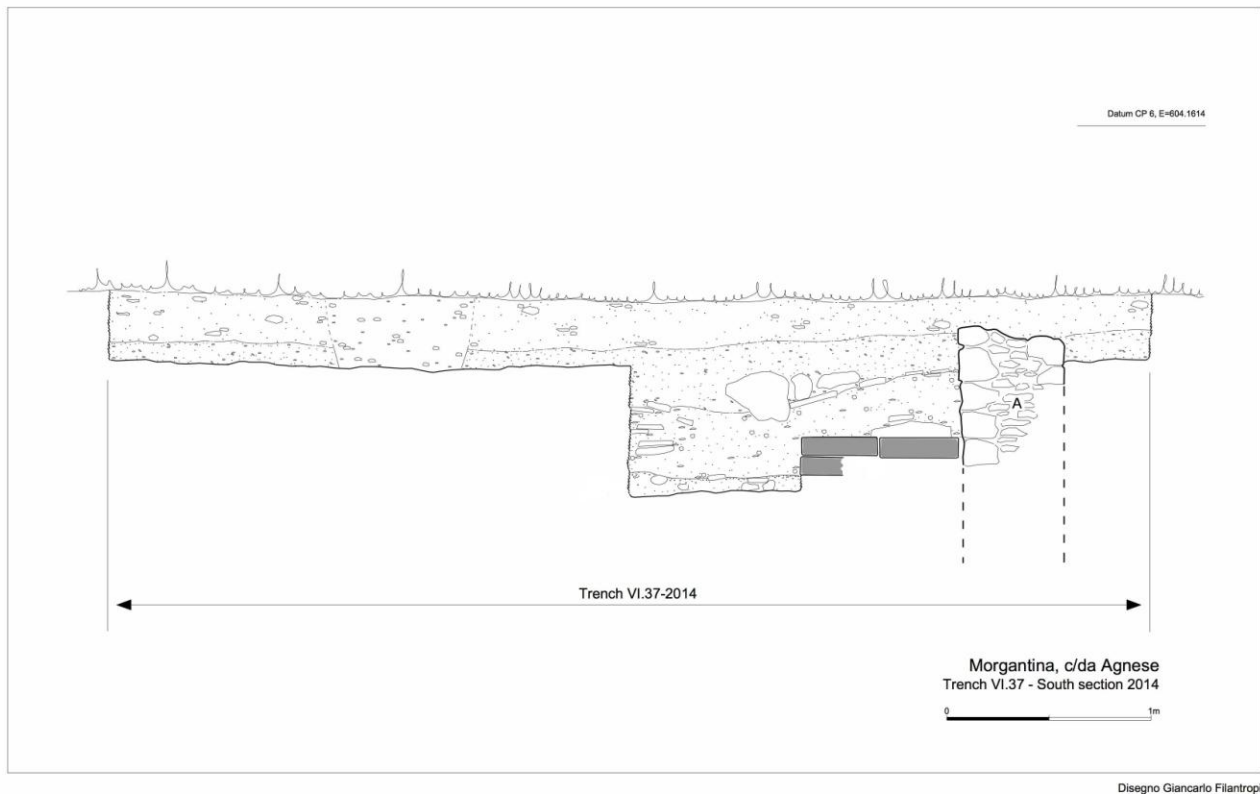


Fig. 22. South section through Trench 37 with brick platform. Drawing by G. Filantropi.



Fig. 23. Photo of brick platform and tile wall facing in Trench 37, view to West.

result of active use of the room, or possibly refuse from nearby activities. It can be dated to the second half of the third century BCE on the basis of ceramic evidence. On the top of this deposit, eight rectangular bricks were laid against the east face of wall A in two courses and in a 2x2 arrangement (fig. 22). A second brick feature was then constructed precisely on top of the first, though we do not know how much time, if any, intervened. Over the stacked brick platform two brick fragments were placed upright on their long sides to create a small enclosed space (fig. 23). The bricks, perhaps originally whole rather than fragmentary, were set directly against the stones of wall A, since the interior plaster face of the wall had been cut in a shape that accommodated them. We hypothesize that the upright bricks may have formed part of a hearth on the basis of visible traces of limited burning on the bricks, as well as evidence (albeit limited) of ash and burnt material in

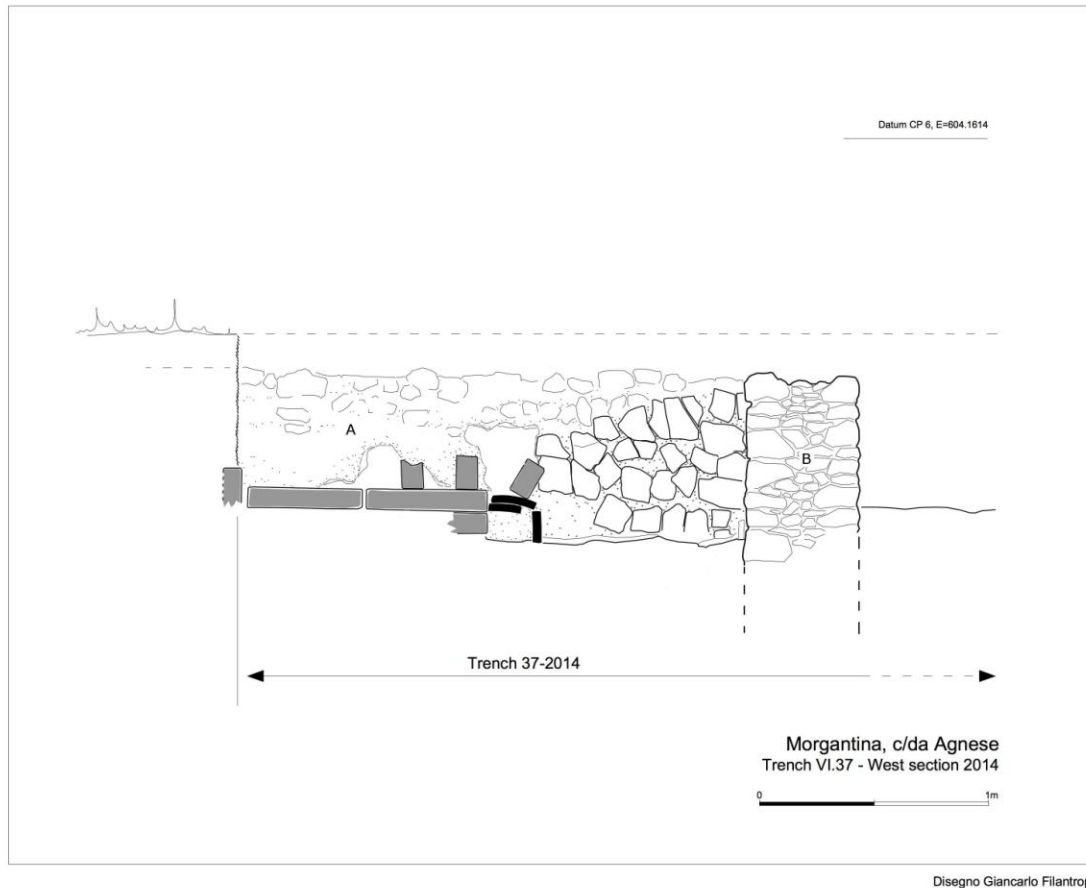


Fig. 24. West section through Trench 37. Drawing by G. Filantropi.

the surrounding soil¹⁸. The upright bricks could, alternatively, have formed part of the channel for a drain or other water feature, which needed to be raised above a ground level or prevented from draining water directly onto the soil. Between the bricks we did not dig into the face of wall A, so it remains to be seen whether the bricks frame a hole that runs through the wall.

Just north of the stacked brick feature along wall A, the plaster facing of the wall was replaced with a distinctive treatment that continued up to the corner with wall B. Here, the wall was faced with roof tile fragments set in mud mortar (figs. 23, 24). It would be understandable if the room's inhabitants planned to use that corner for activities that might damage plaster, but they did not replace the plaster facing of wall B in the same corner. The specific functions of these alterations to the room remain unclear, so activity in this phase remains enigmatic in nature and duration. Nevertheless, these were the last interventions in this trench prior to the abandonment observed across the Southeast Building, so we have assigned them to the Phase Three occupation of the late third century BCE.

¹⁸ A hearth of similar form, though constructed from stone fragments rather than bricks, was discovered at the Early Byzantine site of Kaukana in southeastern Sicily; it too was laid on top of a bench and against a wall, and is dated to the early seventh century CE, WILSON 2011: 272-274, fig. 11.

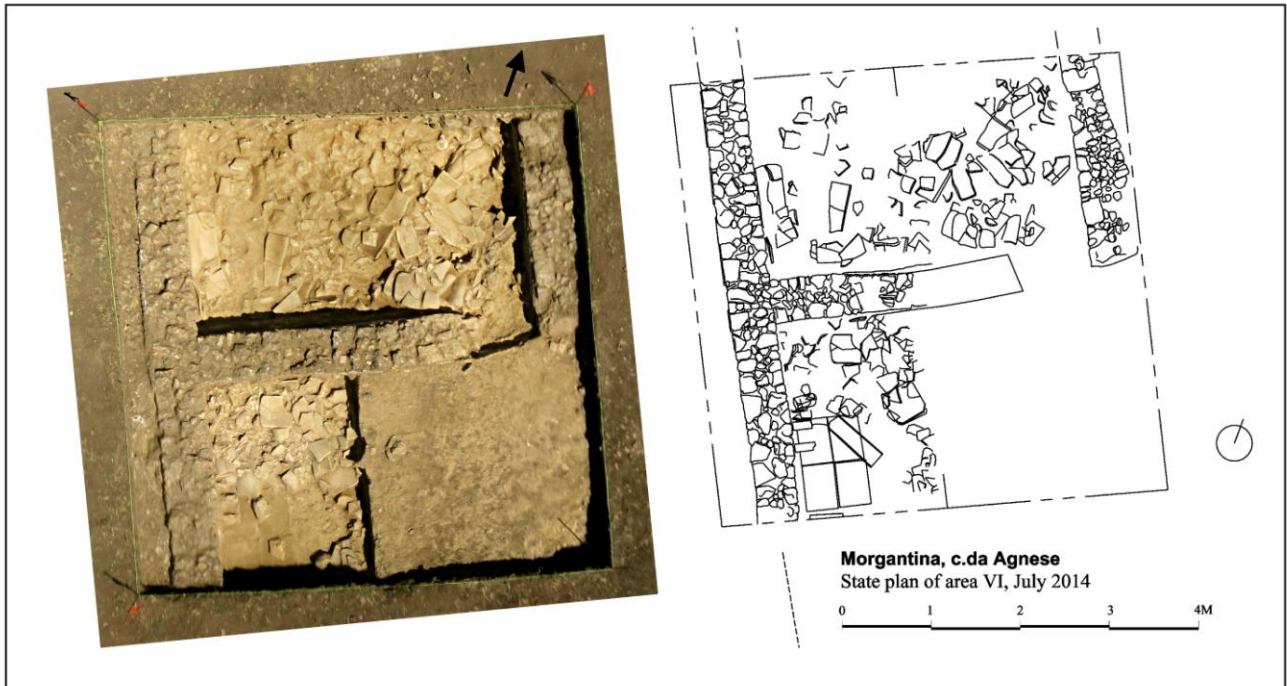


Fig. 25. Aerial photo and plan of tile collapse in Trench 37. Drawing by G. Filantropi.

Phase Four - Abandonment and Destruction (End of the 3rd or beginning of the 2nd century BCE)

As in Trench 36, here too we found evidence for destruction and abandonment in the form of a discrete deposit of collapsed roof tiles (fig. 25), which covered a fairly thick layer of debris and soil accumulation from disuse. The order of deposition (tiles over thick accumulation) is the reverse of Trench 36 (accumulation over tiles), indicating that here the roof remained intact for longer, and that the period of disuse preceded any destruction rather than following it. In the northern room, the tile collapse contained in its interstices a number of terracotta figurine fragments (at least 18 fragments belonging to one or more figurines), along with black gloss ceramic fragments datable to the first half of the third century BCE. Some of this diagnostic material may, however have come from the layer below the tiles, which contained similar ceramic and terracotta fragments in a generally good state of preservation. This lower layer was only partially excavated by our team, but based on the finds in and under the tiles, a roof collapse in or after the second half of the third century seems likely. We hope that after conservation, a fuller study of the terracotta figurines in particular will allow the present dating to be further reinforced or refined. This was the last phase of activity attested in the northern room.

In the southern room, a tile collapse was also found, but it contained a good deal more plaster mixed in with the tiles, and perhaps more significantly it appears to have been partially removed in Phase Five (fig. 25). It too lay over a fairly thick layer of soil and debris, corresponding to a period of abandonment. Similarities in soil composition and diagnostic ceramics between this layer and the use layer below it (see Phase Three) confirms that use and abandonment both fit within our late-third-to-early-second century window. Four knuckle bones, likely from a pig, were found together at the bottom of this abandonment layer, as were an iron javelin head and a lead mercantile seal. The deposits we have interpreted as evidence of abandonment in both northern and southern rooms contain no material that conclusively dates later than the late third century. So, as



Fig. 26. Photo of red plaster fragment in a deposit associated with abandonment in Trench 37.

in Trench 36, the abandonment and collapse here are dated to the end of the third or the beginning of the second century BCE. Numerous fragments of deep red-painted plaster, some up to ca. 20cm long, were also found in the soil that accumulated both above and below the tile fall, suggesting that the upper parts of some walls were decorated in this color and were still standing when the roof collapsed (fig. 26). No red plaster was found still attached to the walls, however.

Phase Five - possible cleanup (2nd century BCE)

As noted above, the tile collapse in the southern room appears to have been disturbed at a later time. While the tiles were fairly thickly deposited at the north and east edges of the room, there were hardly any tiles found lying over the area of the stacked brick feature. It is unlikely that this differential distribution of tiles could have occurred naturally, so our current thinking is that the tile collapse was disturbed and the tiles were in fact swept out of the way as part of the final phase of activity in the trench. We did not encounter any changes in soil composition, consistency, inclusions, or color, indicating that the intervention took place relatively soon after the collapse of the roof. The area may have been cleared of tiles and tile fragments in a search for objects of some value (e.g. coins, vessels, or perhaps metal implements, if the platform was in fact a hearth). Whoever cleared the tiles was probably not looking for construction materials however, or else they would likely have taken the bricks themselves. Nothing links this activity to the Phase Five activity documented in Trench 36 other than the fact that it was a potential cleanup operation.

Observations

After the sequence of events described above, this area of the insula appears to have been largely abandoned until the present day, though two looters' pits of indeterminate date constitute sporadic activity here. In the soil that accumulated over the tile collapse in both the northern and southern rooms a total of four small rectangular bronze sheets with iron rivets driven through them were found (fig. 27). These are to be interpreted



Fig. 27. Bronze rectangular reinforcement plate with iron rivets (inv. 14-234).



14-202

Fig. 28. Silver coin. Mint of Taras; diobol c. 325-280 BCE (inv. 14-202).

as reinforcement plates of some kind, with a character more functional than decorative. Another significant find also deserves mention. In the deposit lying just above the tile collapse in the northern room, we discovered a silver diobol of Taras with small perforation in the flan (fig. 28). While this coin offers little assistance in establishing the chronology of the room, it is, nevertheless, noteworthy as the first of its type to have been found by the American Excavations at Morgantina¹⁹.

The excavation of Trench 37 raised more questions than it answered. We were able to define a northern room, likely the room at the northwestern corner of the insula, as

well as a room just to the south along the insula's western edge. The dating and function of these rooms remains unclear, though they may be provisionally assigned in their original construction to Phase Two of the Southeast Building. In the southern room, alterations to the interior face of wall A and the features built against it attest to some reuse of the space, though for what purpose also remains unclear. Both the construction and use of the space can be dated only generally to the late third or early second century, but further excavation will likely produce evidence for a refined chronology.

Trench VI.38

Trench VI.38 was excavated for the purpose of locating the southwest corner of Lot One. It was sited on the basis of field measurements taken along *stenopos* W14, by comparison with the visible lot boundary between the South Baths and the West Demeter Sanctuary on the western side of the *stenopos*, and with reference to the results of the 2012 geophysical survey²⁰. Measuring 3m x 2m, the trench was situated so that the western half extended into *stenopos* W14 and the eastern half into the interior space of the building.

As mentioned above, the excavations conducted in 1971 had revealed a number of walls and features east of the South Baths across *stenopos* W14 in what we believe to be the southwest quadrant of the Southeast Building. Since the surviving record of these excavations was limited to a single top-plan and cursory mention in the trench notebooks, Trench 38 was also intended to recover details of the previous excavation lost to us²¹. While we were unsuccessful in locating the southwest corner of our lot, excavators did expose a stretch of the building's western wall, likely the continuation of wall A in Trench 37, as well as several features identified by the 1971 excavations (fig. 29). These we were able to photograph and survey, bringing them into the updated area plans kept by Chief Architect of the American Excavations, Erik Thorkildsen.

After the backfill of the 1971 trench was removed and the extent of previous excavation defined, it was evident that we had exposed an unexcavated portion of the ancient street. Here, we continued excavation

¹⁹ Inv. 14-202. AR, Ø 11.79mm, 0.84g, 360°. O/ Helmeted head of Athena, r.; R/ Herakles standing right, strangling the Nemean Lion. Taras, c. 325 - c. 280 BCE. *HN Italy* 976. We would like to thank Gerald Schaus for pointing out that a similarly perforated silver coin, found in the excavations of the acropolis sanctuary at Stymphalos, has been identified by its excavators as a votive offering, which was once nailed to a wooden board or wall. For the coin, see SCHAUS 2014: 74, inv. II-51.

²⁰ BELL 2008; 2010: 732. Geophysical survey: BUSS *et al.* (in preparation).

²¹ For a plan of the 1971 excavations, see *PR XI*: 374, ill. 12.

below the unpaved surfaces of the ancient street (*stenopos* W14) in order to recover evidence that could further clarify the earlier chronology of the Contrada Agnese. As we had seen in *stenopos* W13 in 2013, the earliest street surface was formed from the local bedrock, an unconsolidated limestone which, when exposed, breaks up into a compact yellow sandy soil²². While ceramic evidence (see below) makes it clear that the inhabitants of the city were active in this area following the construction of the street, it is not yet known whether the surface described above was delimited as a road by buildings or if it was an open area. Two distinct soil layers were deposited over the earliest surface of *stenopos* W14. The first layer to accumulate or be deposited over the street was a hard-packed mixture of yellowish, sandy soil and clay. Over this, a second, densely-packed, grey, ashy soil layer accumulated. This uppermost layer appears to have served as the road surface at a later phase and contained several superimposed surfaces with scatters of ceramics, industrial waste, and bone. Similar hard-packed layers of ashy, grey soil were described by excavators working farther north along the *stenopos* in 2004 and 2005 (fig. 30). While it is difficult to assign an absolute date to this second and final phase, the accumulation of debris over the surface of the road may reflect a lack of attention to the maintenance of civic infrastructure frequently encountered in post-211 BCE contexts at Morgantina.

Among the earliest datable material recovered from the excavation of the *stenopos* were several fragments of South Italian red-figure vessels. In the soil between the earliest road surface and the surface that formed above it, excavators recovered a red-figure sherd attributable to the Underworld Painter (fig. 31)²³. While closely datable, this ceramic evidence does not necessarily fix the date when the road was first used.



Fig. 29. Photo of Trench 38, view to south. The chalkboard rests on the unexcavated portion of the street.

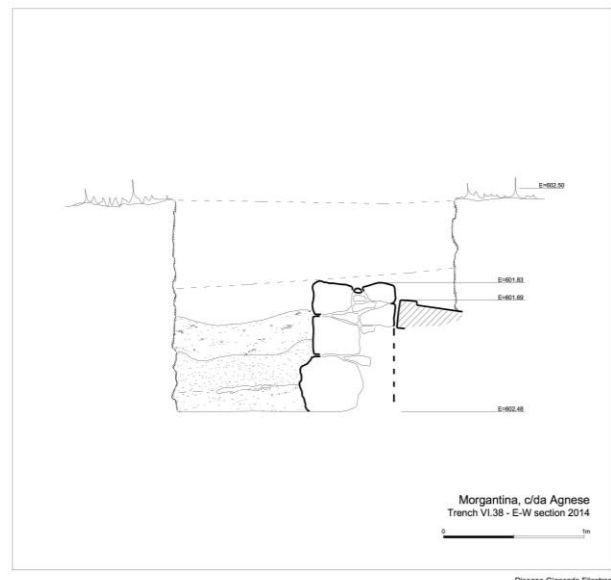


Fig. 30. North section through Trench 38. Drawing by G. Filantropi.

²² WALTHALL *et al.* 2014: 10.

²³ On the Underworld Painter, see TRENDALL, CAMBITOGLIOU 1982: 530-532. We would like to thank Steve Gavel for his attribution of the fragment.



Fig. 31. Fragment of a vessel attributed to the Underworld Painter; ca. 330-310 BCE. (inv. 14-212).

Observations

The results of excavating Trench 38 were two-fold. First, we were able to confirm the location of earlier trenches and record features in both plan and elevation, tying them into the geospatial databases maintained by CAP and the AEM. Second, we learned that the southern boundary of Lot One did not, in fact, align with the lot boundary that is visible just across *stenopos* W14—just as the *ambitus* east of the lot was not in alignment with the *ambitus* in the insula directly to the north. Future excavation in the area will aim to shed further light on the southern boundary of Lot One.

Clandestine Activity



Fig. 32. Photo taken after cleaning on 4 July 2014 to document the clandestine activity in Trench 37 from the night before.

On the night of 5 July 2014, unknown individuals dug several pits in Trenches 36 and 37. While the majority were small, shallow holes—made by turning a shovel to reveal a piece of lead or small bronze coin buried just beneath the surface—two larger holes were dug alongside the inner faces of walls A and C in the northern room of Trench 37 (fig. 32). The larger of the two measured no less than 1.35m x 1.10m, extending on average to a depth 30-45cm below the elevation of the trench surface and at one point tunneling well below wall C. The

looters (evidently looking for objects in precious metal) left behind 13 halved bronze coins, which they placed atop the adjacent wall²⁴.

At the time of writing, we can report that a second round of clandestine looting occurred sometime during the month of May 2015, prior to the start of the 2015 campaign. We have every reason to believe it was the same individual/s responsible for the first round of looting, given that their work focused on the exact spot where the large hole was dug against wall C in 2014. The bold decision to return to the literal scene of the crime has led us to the unpleasant conclusion that the looters found something of particular value in 2014 and returned in 2015 to finish the job. While the clandestine activity did not compromise the archaeological results of 2014, the potential contamination of stratigraphic units will necessarily be dealt with in successive seasons, where our excavations correspond to areas affected by the looting.

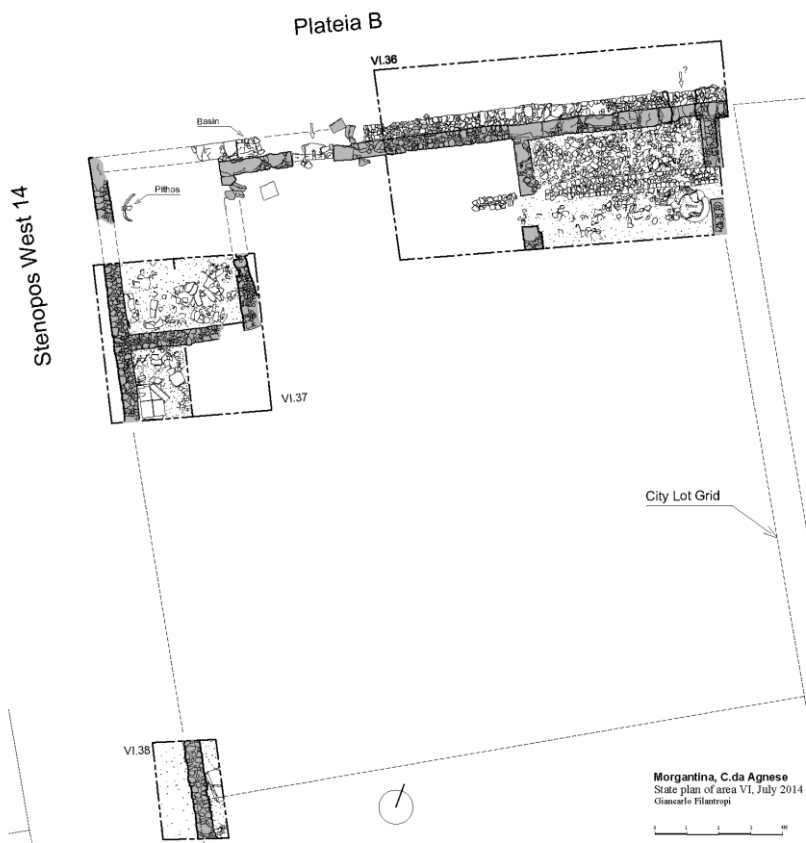


Fig. 33. State plan of 2014 CAP excavations.

Conclusion

The 2014 excavations produced valuable results for CAP, revealing several identifiable rooms within the Southeast Building (fig. 33). The northern part of insula W13/14S preserved a deeper stratigraphy than we had previously encountered in the Contrada Agnese, and the results from this season are encouraging.

²⁴ The halving occurred in antiquity and is a well-documented phenomenon in eastern Sicily. All 13 coins were from the mint of Hieron II (r. 269-215 BCE) and of the type O/ Head of Poseidon, I; R/ Ornamental trident. The coins were taken into evidence by the Carabinieri before it was possible to determine which among the lot were large-flan (MS II 367) which were halved small-flan (MS II 368).

Second-century activity is likely attested, and we will continue to seek a broader picture of the area in the decades and centuries after the sack of the city. At the same time, we have found what may be occupation deposits original to the earliest construction in the building, and future work will allow us to see deeper into its history. It is too early to say with any certainty what the original form of the building was, or what purpose(s) it served, as the limited evidence recovered in these first trenches might be used to support a wide range of speculations. The pithos embedded in a floor in trench VI.36 may represent domestic storage, commercial activity, or industrial production--or indeed a combination of the three. The structure in trench VI.37 tentatively identified as a hearth could indicate that the building was a private house, but it could also have stood in a shop or a workshop. Results from 2014 thus answered some of our questions, but primarily pointed us toward fruitful avenues for further exploration. With data from future excavations at our disposal, we will be able to clarify, substantiate, and extend our picture of the Contrada Agnese in general and the Southeast Building in particular.

Abbreviations

<i>HN Italy</i>	RUTTER K., BURNETT A., 2001, <i>Historia Numorum: Italy</i> , London.
<i>MS I</i>	BELL III, M., 1981, <i>Morgantina Studies, vol. I, The Terracottas</i> , Princeton.
<i>MS II</i>	BUTTREY T.V., ERIM K., GROVES T., HOLLOWAY R.R., 1989, <i>Morgantina Studies, vol. II, The Coins</i> , Princeton.
<i>MS VI</i>	STONE S.C., 2014, <i>Morgantina Studies, vol. VI, The Hellenistic and Roman Fine Wares</i> , Princeton.
<i>PR X</i>	ALLEN H., 1970, "Excavations at Morgantina (Serra Orlando) 1967-1969: Preliminary Report X", in <i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> 74: 359-83.
<i>PR XI</i>	ALLEN H., 1974, "Excavations at Morgantina (Serra Orlando), 1970-1972: Preliminary Report XI", in <i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> 78: 361-83.
<i>RRC</i>	CRAWFORD M.H., 1974, <i>Roman Republican coinage</i> , London.

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