
The Terracotta Figurines from the Altar of Temple D in Agrigento*

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In diesem Beitrag werden die Terrakottafiguren analysiert, die kürzlich im monumentalen Altar des Tempels D in Agrigent gefunden wurden. Seit 2020 führt die Scuola Normale Superiore unter der wissenschaftlichen Leitung von Prof. G. Adornato und unter der Aufsicht des Archäologischen Parks von Agrigento, die erste systematische Ausgrabung des Tempels D (oder der Hera) durch. Die Ausgrabung konzentrierte sich auf den Bereich zwischen dem monumentalen Altar an der Ostseite des Tempels und dessen Stützmauer. Dabei sind mehrere Funde zu Tage getreten, die zwischen dem 6. und dem frühen 5. Jh. v. Chr. datiert werden können und so eine Nutzung des Heiligtums bereits in archaischer Zeit belegen. Zu den Funden gehören Terrakottafiguren, importierte und lokal hergestellte Keramik, eine Kalksteinstatuette eines Musikers, Knochen, Bronzegegenstände und Fragmente von architektonischen Elementen. Unter diesen Materialien befinden sich ostgriechische Figuren, mit und ohne Polos, weibliche Protomai und Statuetten mit Brustkörpern. Eine genaue Analyse der Terrakottafiguren und ihres Kontextes gibt Aufschluss über die rituellen Aktivitäten, die im Heiligtum in der archaischen Periode stattfanden. Aus den koroplastischen Produkten geht hervor, dass der Bereich einer weiblichen Gottheit geweiht war, die junge Frauen beschützte.

1. The Excavation at the Altar of Temple D

Starting from the pandemic year, since 2020 an archaeological team of the *Scuola Normale Superiore*, under the scientific direction of Gianfranco Adornato and the supervision of the Archaeological Park of Agrigento, has been conducting an excavation in the sanctuary of temple D within the UNESCO site of the Valle dei Templi in the Greek ancient city of Akragas¹. The project focuses on the so-called temple D, mistakenly related to the cult of Hera Lacinia or Lucina as reported in a misleading passage by the Roman writer Pliny the Elder (NH 35, 9). The association between the literary source and the monument has been proposed by Tommaso Fazello in his *De Rebus Siculis Decades Duae* in 1558 (“*quintum erat templum Junoni Laciniae sacrum*”): since then, the temple has been attributed to the goddess Hera (**fig. 1**).

The temple is located on the highest rocky spur of the Valley, in a significant and fascinating position, dominating the coast to the south, the borders towards Gela to the east and Selinus to the west, and the landscape with the local population to the north. It played a key role for philosophers, intellectuals, artists, archaeologists and scholars during the Grand Tour period as quintes-

* We would like to thank Pascal Hoffmann and Annika Stöger for inviting us to contribute to this volume: it is our pleasure to offer this *aparche* to Caterina for her friendship, generosity, and hospitality.

¹ Under the auspices of the Archaeological and Landscape Park of the Valley of the Temples, the *Scuola Normale Superiore* has been allowed to explore the sanctuary of temple D and conduct excavations under the scientific direction of the Professor G. Adornato and the supervision of the archaeological officer Dr. M. C. Parello. We would like to sincerely thank the Director of the Park, Arch. R. Sciaratta, and the staff of the Park (V. Caminnecki, M. C. Parello, and M. S. Rizzo) for their support and collaboration.

sence of the right equilibrium between ancient ruin and landscape and was heavily restored by the Regia Custodia in 1792.

It is a Doric temple (16.93 × 38.13 m), a canonical peripteral building with six by thirteen columns, standing on a *crepidoma* of four steps. The interior is composed of a *cella*, with no internal colonnade, it has a typical *pronaos* at the front and *opisthodomos* at the back. The entrance to the *cella* is flanked by two pillars with a staircase to provide access to the rooftop. On the eastern side of the temple stands its altar: it is a monumental, stepped altar, one of the most imposing constructions in the Greek world in comparison to the width of the temple. The length of the altar is 29.45 m and the short sides of the temple are 16.93 m: the ratio between the two monuments is 1.73 which is very unique in the Mediterranean during the Archaic and the Classical periods.

Despite its undoubtedly importance for the ancient city of Akragas, founded in 580 BC by the Geloans, the sacred area has never been investigated and many questions regarding the temple and its sanctuary are still unsolved. From methodological and historiographic points of view, the temple has been usually considered on its own, completely detached from the sanctuary and its altar, which was the most important area within the *temenos*. The project intends to analyse crucial aspects poorly investigated so far, such as the architecture of the temple and that of its altar; the chronology and the definition of the phases within the sanctuary; the extension and the functioning of the sanctuary, and the possible perimeter of its *temenos*; the cult or cults, rituals and deities worshipped here; post-antique history of the monument by collecting and studying the archival sources.

This paper presents a series of terracotta figurines that were discovered during the first two excavation campaigns within the monumental altar of temple D. The article aims at analysing the statuettes in order to identify the votive terracotta types and define their chronology. Furthermore, it intends to focus on their archaeological context, that is the excavation site and the finds which could provide useful information.

The altar is located east of temple D, at 14.62 m from it, and is a monumental rectangular structure (29.45 × 7.50 m) in large blocks of limestone² (fig. 2). The back wall of the altar also served as *analemma*. On the west side, a staircase, which had probably ten steps including the *prothysis*, surrounded by ante pillars, led to the *mensa*³. Therefore, the altar belongs to the architectural type labelled “Stepped Monumental Altars”, a type known in Agrigento since the end of the 6th cent. BC⁴. The altar, such as the altars of the *Olympieion*, temple A, the two altars in the extra-urban sanctuary of Asclepius, and the altar in the area of the so-called “Oratory of Phalaris” could have had the function of *bomòs* and *eschara*⁵.

In 2020, the trench (5 × 2.50 m) within the altar was dug out in the central part of the space between the two long walls and in 2021 it was expanded to the north⁶ (fig. 3). The excavations have brought to light two modern trenches, dug at the end of the nineteenth century along the

2 The archaeological team of the *Scuola Normale Superiore* has also led archaeological investigations in other areas of the sanctuary. During the 2020 campaign, trenches were opened into the *cella* of temple D (D’Andrea 2021, 103–110) and the northwestern corner of the *peristasis* (Rignanese 2021, 90–95); during the 2021 season, the south-eastern slopes of the temple hill (Amara et al. 2022) and west of the temple (D’Andrea 2022) were investigated. See also Adornato 2021, 81–89.

3 Koldewey – Puchstein 1899, 170–171; Marconi 1929, 76; Yavis 1949, 186 with bibliography; Vanaria 1992, 11–24; Di Stefano 2017, 169, figg. 19–20; Mertens 2006, 386–390.

4 The type of monumental rectangular altar with steps is defined “Stepped Monumental Altar” by C.G. Yavis and “Type D” by M.G. Vanaria; Vanaria 1992, 15; Di Stefano 2017, 179–180. In Agrigento other examples of this type are the northeast altar of the so-called temple of the Dioscuri, the altar of temple A (late 6th – early 5th cent. BC); the altar of *Olympieion* (5th cent. BC); and the altar of temple L (late 5th cent. BC).

5 Di Stefano 2017, 186.

6 Sarcone 2021, 96–102; Sarcone – Guerini 2022. The layers identified in the campaign of 2021 are the extension of those of the previous year; for this reason, their numbering is the same as in 2020.

analemma and more recently, in the nineties, along the western side of the altar⁷. The two trenches were related to modern measures taken to reinforce the altar. Despite these interventions, the layers between and under them were intact. The excavations revealed two layers (USS 3001, 3003) of dark soil rich in ashes, burnt bones, stones and fragments of finds (pottery, terracotta figurines, bronzes, tiles) overlapping layers of (fig. 4): clay (US 3005); soil rich in finds (US 3006); chips of limestone, likely manufacturing waste produced by the installation of the blocks (US 3021); clay (3023); soil containing finds (US 3024) and clay (US 3026). This layer was deposited to seal the space between the two walls; underneath this layer was a thin layer of limestone chips (US 3028) and a layer of clay (US 3029) that reaches up to the last row of blocks on which the foundation of the *analemma* rests⁸.

Among the most interesting materials of archaic findings from the altar, it is worth mentioning a large fragment of Corinthian pottery attributed to the Dodwell Painter (585/580), a portion of Corinthian cup ascribed to the so-called “Silhouette Goat Painter I”, and the “Siana cup” attributed to the Attic Painter C: these materials confirm the chronology of Akragas’ foundation around 580 BC, as we know from literary sources (Pind. fr. 105 Bowra=124 a-b Snell; Thuc. 6, 4), thus giving us crucial information about the first cults, trades and production activities on the southern hill.

Moreover, the discovery of several tiles and two fragments of a lateral *sima* with traces of polychromy, which belonged to an archaic building, clearly indicates the existence of a previous temple around 540–530, later replaced by the construction of the Doric temple D. A significant evidence hypothetically attesting to the archaic sanctuary came to light west to the temple, where a limestone wall in a bad state of preservation was investigating, possibly identifiable with the archaic *temenos* which enclosed the sacred area before the construction of temple D. Among the most recent archaeological materials, we can mention Attic cup-*skyphoi* and *skyphoi* dating to the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 5th century; a Vicup and a *skyphos* type A, dating to around 470–460, may represent the latest examples of pottery from the trench at the altar.

The archaeological evidence from temple D in Agrigento allows us to better define the architectural, artistic, and cultural frame during the Archaic period: as far as we know, no temples or sacred buildings are attested in Agrigento around the second quarter of the 6th century, that is after the foundation of the colony and during Phalaris’ tyranny. At this first phase we assign the rounded wells in the sanctuary of the Chthonic Deities and a human presence in the sacred area of the sanctuary of temple D. Only around the mid-6th century small temples are built and documented in the southern part of the city: the small temple below temple G, the sanctuary of the Chthonic Divinities, Villa Aurea, the temple near Gate V, the small temple southeast of the *Olympieion* and architecture in the area of Sant’Anna comprise the earliest monumental architecture in the city. To these we can add the late-6th century small temple near Gate 1 and the building beneath the monumental temple D. The buildings are clearly connected to a specific location and function: in proximity of the gates, as in the cases of Gates I, IV, and V, in association with strategic locations, as in the case of the temple G or Sant’Anna, in terms of a definition of boundaries between the *polis*, the *asty*, the *chora*, and control on the whole city, as in the case of temple D. The coeval construction of the wall circuit will help to emphasize and convey this impression and distinction as well. These structures are reminiscent of architectural techniques and models in nearby Gela, both in their typology and their metrology. Construction technique on these buildings is dominated by using stone blocks, the presence of guidelines on the foundation, the presence of surfaces of reference, and the trim of the *euthynteria*. In these elements, scholars have correctly

7 In 1883, C. Cavallari carried out an excavation along the outer wall of the *analemma* in order to secure the altar (*Antichità Agrigentine* 1887); also in the late 1880s, R. Koldewey and O. Puchstein made an architectural drawing of the altar blocks and discovered some finds (Koldewey – Puchstein 1899, 170–171).

8 Sarcone 2021, 96–98; Sarcone – Guerini 2022.

recognized the work of craftsmen trained in a Selinuntine tradition and workshop. In the field of architectural tradition, significant contributions have come from Gela and Selinus regarding the adoption of specific small-scale architecture, techniques, and architectural decoration: construction techniques contain Selinunte-style characteristics, while the tastes and practices of Geloan artistic workshops preponderate in methods of construction and decoration. Indeed, the architectural decoration of temples G1 and D1 at Agrigento depends on the coeval Geloan production, as in the case of the *thesauros* of the Geloans at Olympia⁹.

[G. A.]

2. The Terracotta Figurines

The excavations carried out inside the altar have brought to light several materials dated between the 6th and early 5th cent. BC; therefore, they testify that the attendance at the sacred area began as early as the Archaic period. The finds include terracotta figurines, a limestone musician statuette, burnt bones, fragments of bronze objects, such as a *phiale* and two arrowheads, elements of shell necklace, a loom weight, two lamps (one belongs to the Syro-Phoenician type), fragments of architectural elements (archaic tiles, *simae*, limestone triglyphs). The pottery fragments¹⁰ mainly constitute Corinthian drinking vessels (*kylikes*, *kotylai*, *kotyliskoi*); whereas there are less fragments of Ionic-type B2 cups, black-glazed pottery (*amphoriskoi*, *skyphoi*, *kylikes*), as well as locally and colonially manufactured vessels, cooking vessels and common wares.

Regarding the coroplastic artefacts, the head of a terracotta figurine with high *polos* comes from the surface layer (US 3001)¹¹. Due to its state of preservation, her face is unclear, but it does appear chubby with a broad nose and plump lips (fig. 5). The statuette's body is missing, but it appears to belong to the East Greek coroplastic production¹². It was created in some East Greek coroplastic workshops, principally Ionian ones, and spread throughout the Mediterranean from the second quarter to the end of the 6th cent. BC¹³. East Greek figurines represent several iconographies (anthropomorphic figurines, mythical and fantastic creatures, and animals). The most successful iconography is the enthroned female statuette with *chiton* and *himation* and *polos*, such as in this case, or with veil and *stephane*¹⁴, usually without attributes. These terracotta figurines were very common in Sicily and were dated between 560 and 540 BC, and before 520 BC¹⁵. Many statuettes were found in sacred contexts dedicated to Demeter, such as the *Thesmophorion* in Bital-

⁹ See Adornato 2012.

¹⁰ The pottery fragments have been studied by Dr. Amara to whom the attributions and dating of these fragments are due; see Amara 2023.

¹¹ AK21.3001.8. H. 5.6 cm; w. 2.4 cm. Other three coroplastic fragments have been found, but due to their state of preservation they can not be identified.

¹² Albertocchi 2012, 96–106.

¹³ Caporusso 1975, 51; Dewailly 1983; Pautasso 1996, 33; Panvini – Sole 2005, 29–30; Pautasso – Albertocchi 2009, 283–288; Bertesago 2009, 59–60; Albertocchi 2012, 96–106; Albertocchi 2022 [S. M. Bertesago], 332–342. This type is known by several names, and because it was produced mainly in Ionian centres, it is known as “Ionian”. The main production centres were Miletus and Samos, but there were other centres and so the name “East Greek” is preferred; Adornato 2011, 98, n. 53; Albertocchi 2012, 104; Albertocchi 2022 [S. M. Bertesago], 232–233.

¹⁴ A statuette with *himation* and *stephane* has been found in layer 3006; see *infra*.

¹⁵ In the sacred area of Bitallemi, East Greek figurines were found in “layer 5”, dated between 560 and 540 BC, and someone in “layer 4”, dated between 540 and 530 BC; Orlandini 1966, 25–28. This dating is confirmed by the materials found in the sanctuary of the *Malophoros* in Selinus dated between 590/80 and 550/40 BC; Dewailly 1992, 15–24. For a summary of the chronological question of this production see Albertocchi 2022 [S. M. Bertesago], 338–340; Albertocchi 2012, 103; Pautasso – Albertocchi 2009, 283–288; Pautasso 1996, 33–34. The fragment could belong to an East Greek figurine or a local imitation, but it is worth noting that imitations are generally few and in any case are dated by the end of the 6th cent. BC; Albertocchi 2022 [S. M. Bertesago], 340. The terracotta found in the altar was made by a mica-rich reddish clay, which would suggest a Samian production; Pautasso – Albertocchi 2009, 284; Boldrini 1994, 33. 144. 229.

emi¹⁶, the sanctuary of the *Malophoros* in Selinus¹⁷ and the votive stipe of Piazza S. Francesco in Catania¹⁸, but also in Naxos, Megara Hyblea, Syracuse, Camarina, Morgantina, Himera and Agrigento¹⁹ as well as the indigenous centres of Monte S. Mauro of Caltagirone and Grammichele²⁰.

According to E. De Miro, statuettes with high *polos* are slightly earlier than those without it and they could be dated to the mid-6th cent. BC²¹. The first type is known in Gela (from the *Athenaion*²² and from *Thesmophorion*²³), in Selinus²⁴, in Catania²⁵, and in Licata, in the sanctuary in contrada Casalicchio²⁶. This type is also attested in Agrigento, where specimens were found in the sacred area near Gate V²⁷ and in other sacred as well as funerary contexts²⁸. The statuettes found near Gate V (550 and 530 BC) and at Sant'Anna, such as the statuette found in our excavation, have a high *polos* covering their forehead. This type of *polos*, known as “Rhodian”, “dated to 570–500 BCE is a specific, very tall and stretched *polos* that is usually either straight or slightly tapering towards the top”²⁹. According to G. Van Rooijen “though there are some cases of imitation, most of the local figurines from the same period are very different. Fundamental differences such as the depiction of the body, and details such as the *polos*, show that this type was not part of the mainstream development of terracotta figurines in Agrigento. The figurines should be seen as an external element”³⁰.

The fragment with *polos*, datable to the mid-6th cent. BC, was found together with a bronze *phiale*, fragments of *simae* and bone. The pottery found in the same layer include fragments of two Corinthian black-figure *kylikes*, one of which belongs to the group of the so-called *Vogelfriesmaler* (late MC-LC I) and the other to the workshop of the Silhouette Goat Painter II (LC I); seven Corinthian *kotylai*, including one in black-polychrome style (late MC-LT I) and two black-figure specimens belonging to the Chaeronea Group (LC I) and to the workshop of the Silhouette Goat Painter II; three of Corinthian *kotyliskoi* dated to the second half of the 6th cent. BC; Ionic-type B2 cups; an Attic *amphoriskos* and an imitation of an Attic stemmed-dish (500–480 BC).

The terracotta artefacts found in layer 3003 represent further types of statuettes, such as figurines with pectorals and female *protomai*. This layer, in addition to common wares, cooking vessels, bone and carbon remains, yielded fragments of three Corinthian *kotylai*, as well as a local one, dated between 580 and 550 BC, of which one belonging to the workshop of the Silhouette Goat Painter I (580–570 BC); two locally produced *kylikes* dated in the same chronological range, and two locally or colonial produced *kylikes* with banded decoration dated to the second quarter of the 6th cent. BC.

Regarding the terracotta figurines, a fragment represents part of three rows of multiple ovoid pendants³¹ (fig. 6a). It belongs to the type of the statuettes with pectorals, known by the mislead-

16 Albertocchi 2022 [S. M. Bertesago], 232–233.

17 Bertesago 2009, 59–60; Gasparri 2016, 127–134.

18 Rizza 1960, 247–262; Pautasso 2009, 103–105.

19 De Miro 2000, 107.

20 Albertocchi 2022 [S. M. Bertesago], 334 with bibliography.

21 De Miro 2000, 101 with bibliography.

22 Panvini – Sole 2005, 38–39, pl. IIIc-d, IVa-d, Va.

23 Panvini 1998, 171, V.7; Albertocchi 2022 [S. M. Bertesago], 332–342.

24 Dewailly 1992, 151; Spatafora 2020, 302–304, fig. 13.

25 Rizza 1960, 256, 259, fig. 21,6; Pautasso 1996, 33–34, pl. III.

26 De Miro 1986, 105, pl. XLV, figg. 3–5.

27 De Miro 2000, 194, n. 848, pl. LVIII (inv. AG 9024). According to the scholar, the statuette with high *polos* is a variant of the “Rhodian” type, three specimens of which were found in the small temple east of Gate V; De Miro 2000, 257, nn. 1593–1594, pl. LVII.

28 Van Rooijen 2021, “Type E”, 240–244, nn. 71–76.

29 Van Rooijen 2021, 61.

30 Van Rooijen 2021, 61.

31 AK20.3003.109. H. 3.9 cm; w. 6.1 cm.

ing name “Athena Lindia”³². They represent enthroned or standing female figures wearing a *chiton* with pectoral bands and pendants. These figurines are the main characteristic of Sicilian coroplastics and were produced for the first time in Agrigento³³ and then in Selinus³⁴ and Gela³⁵. The figurines with pectorals were produced between the middle of the 6th and the end of the 5th cent. BC. The fragment found within the altar has three rows of pendants and G. van Rooijen stated that the addition of a third row appears for the first time in a statuette found south of the temple of Zeus, dated 490–470 BC³⁶. However, the statuette resembles a group of figurines found in the sanctuary of the Chthonic Divinities dated to 480–470 BC³⁷. They represent an enthroned female figurine wearing a *polos* and three cords. These cords are adorned with pointed seed-shaped pendants, seven on the first two, eight of which are thinner, and pointier ones on the third with oval *fibulae* with indistinct details. Based on these minute details, the fragment seems to belong to a statuette dating to 480–470 BC, which represents an enthroned female figure wearing a *polos* and multiple pendants in three rows on the chest.

Another coroplastic artefact from the same layer represents part of a figurine with a *polos* bordered by a thick fillet; an almond-shaped eye and locks on the forehead³⁸ (**fig. 6b**). Its state of preservation does not allow us to determine whether it belongs to a statuette or a *protome*. However, this type of fringe with short, separated strands in close proximity to each other, resembles “Type 9F” of the female *protomai* found in the sanctuary of the *Malophoros* in Selinus. This is a type of *protomai* that reveals an Attic influence and is uncommon in Selinus and in other colonies³⁹. The *protomai* of Selinus were dated to the last quarter of the 6th cent. BC⁴⁰, when the fragment in question could be dated.

The female *protomai* were the predominant votive offering in the second half of the 6th century in Sicily⁴¹. The major manufacturing centres were located in Agrigento, Gela, Naxos and Selinus⁴². In Agrigento⁴³ the female *protomai* were found in the so-called sanctuary of the Chthonic Divinities⁴⁴, at San Biagio⁴⁵, at Sant’Anna⁴⁶, and at Palma di Montechiaro⁴⁷.

Fragments of female *protomai* were also found in layer 3006, where the most finds were unearthed: fragments of *louteria*, a lamp, an element of a shell necklace, fragments of tiles and bone. Corinthian materials count many fragments of *kotylai*: one belongs to the Silhouette Goat Painter I (CM-CT I), a second to the workshop of Chaeronea Painter dated to CT I, the other

32 Fiertler 2001, 53–76; Albertocchi 2004; Pautasso 2012, 133–134; Van Rooijen 2021.

33 De Miro 2000, 102–104, 106–107; Albertocchi 2004, 165–168.

34 Dewailly 1992.

35 Albertocchi 2004, 165–168. In Gela, statuettes with pectorals have been found in the *Thesmophorion*, on the acropolis in the votive stipe under building 12 (Panvini – Sole 2005, 122–126), in the cult edifice in “Carrubazza”, in the sacred area in via Fiume and in the area of the old railway station; Fiertler 2001, 54, no. 18. For a list of places of discovery of statuettes with pectorals in Sicily see Fiertler 2001, 55.

36 Van Rooijen 2021, 129, 259–260, n. 93.

37 Van Rooijen 2021, 310–325, nn. 142–151.

38 AK20.3003.107. H. 5.8 cm; w. 4 cm.

39 Wiederkehr Schuler 2004, 170–171, pl. 40. Only two specimens with this fringe were found, even if they present a different facial structure: one specimen was found in Gela and the other in Locri; Uhlenbrock 1988, pl. 52, fig. 52b, Barra Bagnasco 1986, pl. 18, fig. 93. About “Type 9”, see Croissant 2007.

40 Wiederkehr Schuler 2004, 80.

41 Croissant 1983.

42 Uhlenbrock 1988, 117–138; Pautasso 1996, 46–66; Pautasso 2012, 115–124; Musumeci 2008, 88–99 (Francavilla di Sicilia); Ismaelli 2011, 169–173 (Gela, santuario del Predio Sola).

43 Uhlenbrock 1988, 125–128. See also Pautasso 1996, 117; Pautasso 2012, 122–123.

44 Marconi 1933, 55–56; De Miro 2000, 104–107.

45 Genovese 2020, 182, 189–190.

46 Fiorentini 1969, 66, 79, pl. XXXIX, 1.

47 Caputo 1938. In Agrigento, female *protomai* were also found in the Coroplast’s Dump, in Mosè Necropolis and Montagna di Marzo; Uhlenbrock 1988, 125–128.

fragments could be dated to the second half of the 6th cent. BC and to the early 5th cent. BC. Some Corinthian *kotyliskoi* are dated between CT I and CT II; another three to the second half of the 6th cent. BC and, finally, one presents the “Antiparos” pattern (CT II). The Attic imports⁴⁸ include two fragments of Siana cup, a foot of Vicup (490–480 BC), a black-painted *kylix* (500–475 BC) and a *kylix* of the first half of the 5th cent. BC, a rim of cup-*skyphos* (500–480 BC) and two *skyphoi* of the early 5th cent. BC.

Regarding the female *protomai*, a fragment presents wavy locks of hair and a large oblong right eye⁴⁹ (fig. 7a). The waving strands lead me to hypothesize that the fragment may belong to a female *protome* that finds comparisons in Selinus. In particular, the fragment seems similar, due to the hair and the prominent eye without details, to “Type 9E1.1” of the *protomai* found in the sanctuary of the *Malophoros* in Selinus⁵⁰. This type, characterised by five waving strands, such as “Type 9F” previously considered, reveals an Attic influence and is dated to the last quarter of the 6th cent. BC; therefore, the fragment could be datable to 530–510 BC.

From the same layer, other fragments could belong to *protomai*, although their state of preservation does not allow me to exclude that they could also be part of busts or statues. One of these fragments shows traces of burning; another represents the lower part of a female face with part of the nose, prominent chin, and a small mouth with plump lips⁵¹ (fig. 7b). The preserved part is so small that it is difficult to suggest comparisons although some details might be useful in this regard. The small smiling mouth, with slightly raised corners, dimples at the sides and a lower lip fuller than the upper one, is similar to that of a bust found in Agrigento⁵² and a *protome*⁵³ and a life-size female head⁵⁴ found in the sanctuary of *Malophoros* in Selinus⁵⁵. Although the terracottas from Selinus show slight differences with the bust from Agrigento, they are so similar that L. Bernabò Brea wrote about the fictile head from Selinus: “*ci si potrebbe chiedere se anche questa testa non debba in realtà essere attribuita a quell’arte geloo-agrigentina*”⁵⁶. It has been proposed that both the *protome* and the head were imported to Selinus from Agrigento, because they strongly recall the Agrigento style. According to E. Wiederkehr Schuler, it is also possible that the female *protome* found in Selinus was made by a craftsman who came to Selinus from Agrigento, or that it was produced from a mould imported from Agrigento. These comparisons lead me to place the fragment chronologically in the final third of the 6th cent. BC.

In layer 3006, two heads of female statuettes were unearthed. One presents a plump face with veil and *stephane*⁵⁷, front moulded, and although the body is missing, it would seem to belong to the East Greek figurines (fig. 7c)⁵⁸. It finds comparisons in Agrigento⁵⁹: a similar figurine was found at the base of the southwest wall of the sanctuary of Chthonic Deities, dated between the

48 Imports also include a Corinthian pyx, two Ionic B2-type Ionic cups, and a East Greek olpeta of the second half of the 6th–early 5th cent. BC.

49 AK20.3006.582. H. 5.1 cm; w. 6.1 cm.

50 Wiederkehr Schuler 2004, “Type 9E1.1”, 169–170, pl. 38–39. See also Uhlenbrock 1988, 95, n. 42, pl. 50a.

51 AK20.3006.593. H. 7.1 cm; w. 6.3 cm; h. 3.8 cm; w. 2.2 cm.

52 Moscati 1973, 115; Langlotz 1963, 65–66, pl. 386–387; Pugliese Carratelli 1986, fig. 210; Froning 1990, 347–348, figg. 16–17.

53 Wiederkehr Schuler 2004, “Type 13A”, 209–210, pl. 65; Gabrici 1927, 278, pl. 64,2.

54 Gabrici 1927, 278, pl. 64,3; Bernabò Brea 1958, 111; Wiederkehr Schuler 2004, 210.

55 *Protomai* inspired by Agrigento models of the late Archaic period have also been found in Himera and dated to the 5th cent. BC; Allegro 1976, 341, pl. 52, figg. 3–4. Another terracotta head recalling Agrigento artefacts was found in the sanctuary of *Malophoros*; Gabrici 1927, 279–280, pl. 64,1; Breitenstein 1945, 126, fig. 21. 128; Wiederkehr Schuler 2004, 210, n. 15. Other examples of this type of *protomai* were found in Camarina; Giudice 1979, 317, pl. 5, fig. 11,1.

56 Bernabò Brea 1958, 111. For Agrigento style see Adornato 2011, 121–137; Adornato 2017, 35–49.

57 AK21.3006.13. H. 5.2 cm; w. 4.1 cm.

58 For references see statuette with high *polos*, AK21.3001.8.

59 See Marconi 1933, 55, pl. XV, 4.

middle and the late 6th cent. BC; another was found at the *Lesche* dated to the late 6th cent. BC⁶⁰. The second head⁶¹, although poorly preserved, still has the red colour painted on the mouth (**fig. 7d**). It shows a diadem and *himation* covering the hair arranged on the sides of the face. It resembles a female head with veil and diadem found in Agrigento in the sanctuary area between the temple of Zeus and Gate V and dated to the late 6th cent. BC⁶².

A fragment of a female face comes from layer 3023, where archaeologists found a limestone musician statuette⁶³ and two fragments of Corinthian *kotylai* of the second half of the 6th cent. BC, a *kotyliskos*; a fragment of lip-cup of the Little Masters and another Attic *kylix* of the early 5th cent. BC.

The fragment presents a triangular face, almond-shaped prominent eyes, a long and thin nose with broad and thick nostrils. The mouth is realistically rendered with sinuously articulated lips⁶⁴ (**fig. 8**). Unfortunately, the fragment on the left side is missing, so it is misleading to propose hypotheses. The development of the right side suggests that the fragment might belong to a female *protome*. In this regard, the find appears to recall the so-called “East Sicilian Type” and in particular a *protome* found in Bitalemi⁶⁵. The prototype is East Greek, but the type is closer to specimens from Samos although it shows slight differences. This type is the second most common one in Sicily with about a hundred examples and is represented at every major coroplastic centre⁶⁶. In Agrigento this “East Sicilian Type” is represented by an unpublished *protome* and by a large mould which was part of the debris of the coroplast’s dump in Agrigento found in 1893 under the walls⁶⁷. This type is generally dated to the last quarter of the century.

In addition to these terracotta fragments, others, that could not be identified due their state of preservation, were found during the excavations. These are: a female head with low *polos*, front moulded, the surface of which is so ruined that it does not allow us to add anything else⁶⁸; two fragments of *chiton*⁶⁹, of which one represents the right shoulder with two long locks of hair where the *chiton* is held by two small buttons⁷⁰; and a fragment of the *himation* probably referable to a female *protome*⁷¹. It is interesting to note the finding of a hand with traces of red colour and thus probably referable to a male figurine that must have been clutching an element that was inserted in the through-hole of the hand⁷².

[G. V.]

3. Preliminary Conclusions

The figurines and the pottery found in the altar during the 2020 and 2021 archaeological campaigns coherently testify to ritual activities in the area as early as the Archaic period. Attendance in the area seems to have begun as early as the second quarter of the 6th cent. BC, in connection or immediately after the foundation of the *apoikia*⁷³, until 470–460 BC, *terminus post quem* for the

60 De Miro 2000, 127, n. 6, pl. LVIII; De Miro 2000, 281, n. 1895, pl. LVII.

61 AK20.3006.592. H. 3.5 cm; w. 3.5 cm.

62 De Miro 2000, 247, n. 1485, pl. XCIV.

63 For the musician statuette see Sarcone – Guerini 2022, n. 18, figg. 11–13.

64 AK20.3023.52. H. 5.7 cm; w. 4.3 cm.

65 Uhlenbrock 1988, 97–99, pl. 52–53; in particular, n. 46c, pl. 53b.

66 For the list of all examples of “East Sicilian Type” see Uhlenbrock 1988, 98.

67 Rizzo 1897, 300–303; Aleo Nero 2009, pp. 242–243, VI/187; Aleo Nero – Portale 2018, 253.

68 AK20.3002.134. H. 2.9 cm; w. 1.6 cm.

69 AK20.3006.581. H. 4.4 cm; w. 6.8 cm.

70 AK20.3006.17. H. 4.8 cm; w. 3.5 cm.

71 AK20.3006.64. H. 4.1 cm; w. 4.4 cm.

72 AK20.3022.1. L. 3.3 cm; w. 2.1 cm. A similar specimen is exhibited at the Agrigento Regional Archaeological Museum “Pietro Griffo”, inv. 20397.

73 On the foundation of the *apoikia* see Adornato 2011.

construction of the monumental altar⁷⁴. The fragments of terracotta tiles and architectural decoration would seem to suggest the presence of a structure of the mid-6th cent. BC, which was later dismantled in order to build the monumental temple and its altar⁷⁵.

This paper focused on terracotta figurines because they are the evidence of ritual actions, therefore they could be an important archaeological record to study ancient religious practices⁷⁶. The terracotta votives found during the archaeological campaign of 2020 and 2021 mostly belong to female *protomai*, female statuettes with *polos* or with veil and *stephane*, and figurines with pectorals datable from the end of the sixth to the first three decades of the 5th cent. BC. The figurines with pectorals represent a divine image, although some scholars proposed a specific identification, whereas others have suggested that they are a generic representation, and their interpretation depends very much on the context⁷⁷. Interestingly, according to A. Pautasso, they would represent a female deity related to the regenerative cycle of nature⁷⁸.

The problem of the identity of the *protomai* has been a matter for debate for a long time now; in the past they were traditionally identified with Demeter or Kore⁷⁹. Recently, A. Muller and S. Huysecom-Haxhi have proposed that the *protomai* are a partial representation of seated women who, due to their position and the veil on their heads, are to be identified as matronly female figures⁸⁰. As T. Ismaelli states, the worshipper dedicating a *protome* to the deity “*si presenta come giovane donna giunta alla maturità sessuale, rispettosa dell’aidōs imposto dal contesto sociale, senza rinunciare alla bellezza ed alla chāris: un’immagine che combina seduzione e rigido rispetto dei codici comportamentali*”⁸¹.

It is interesting to underline that the figurines found in the altar of temple D in Agrigento, though few and fragmentary, seem to reveal a semantic coherence. The votive evoked the image of a woman who, having reached sexual maturity, is ready for marriage or is already married. The statuette of the so-called “Athena Lindia” suggests the concept of fertility (human and vegetal) to which the statuettes of enthroned matronly goddesses, with or without *polos*, and the female *protomai* also allude. These votives could be offered by young women from Agrigento probably during rites of passage into womanhood. It is misleading to attribute certain votive iconographies to specific cults, but from the materials found it would seem that the area – at least in the Archaic period – was consecrated to a female deity who protected young women. There are many female deities who could have played this role (Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, Artemis, and Persephone), but regardless of the identity of the titular deity of the sacred area, it is important to underline that a cultic valence of the archaic sanctuary was related to one of the crucial moments in the female world: marriage.

Future archaeological campaigns carried out by the Scuola Normale Superiore in the area of temple D will allow us to shed light on this critical phase at the sanctuary, its worshippers, ritual activities and probably the deity to which the area was dedicated.

[G. A., G. V.]

74 Sarcone 2021, 101–102.

75 Sarcone – Guerini 2022.

76 Bertesago 2009, 58–59. For methodological remarks see Lippolis 2001.

77 Dewailly 1992, 152–157; Pautasso 1996, 64–66; Hinz 1998, 37–38; Van Rooijen 2021, 16–19. M. Albertocchi shares this interpretation, but she often considers the statuettes with pectorals as representations of Demeter especially in connection with the protection of agrarian fertility; Albertocchi 2004, 171–172.

78 Pautasso 1996, 64–66.

79 For a summary, see Uhlenbrock 1988, 139–156; Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2007, 237; Ismaelli 2011, 219–224.

80 Huysecom-Haxhi – Muller 2007, 231–247; Muller 2009, 81–95; Huysecom-Haxhi 2009; Ismaelli 2013, 131–134.

81 Ismaelli 2013, 132.

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Figures



Fig. 1: View of temple D and its altar from south (drone photo by C. Cassanelli).



Fig. 2: View of the altar from south (drone photo by C. Cassanelli).

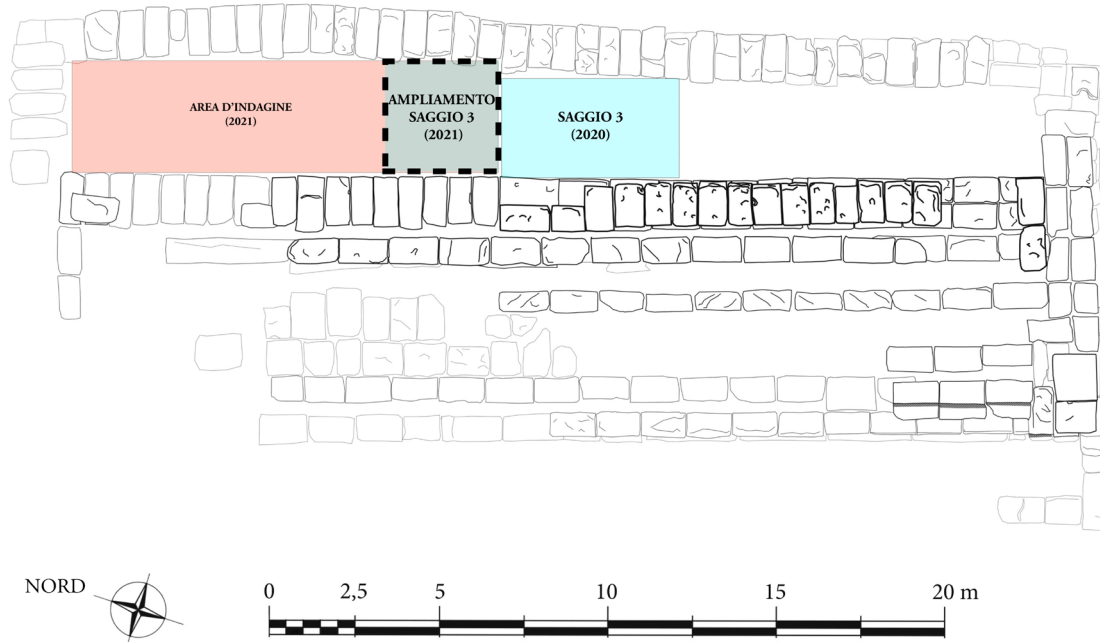


Fig. 3: Trenches carried out inside the altar in 2020 and 2021 (drawing by G. Rignanese; from Sarcone – Guerini 2022).

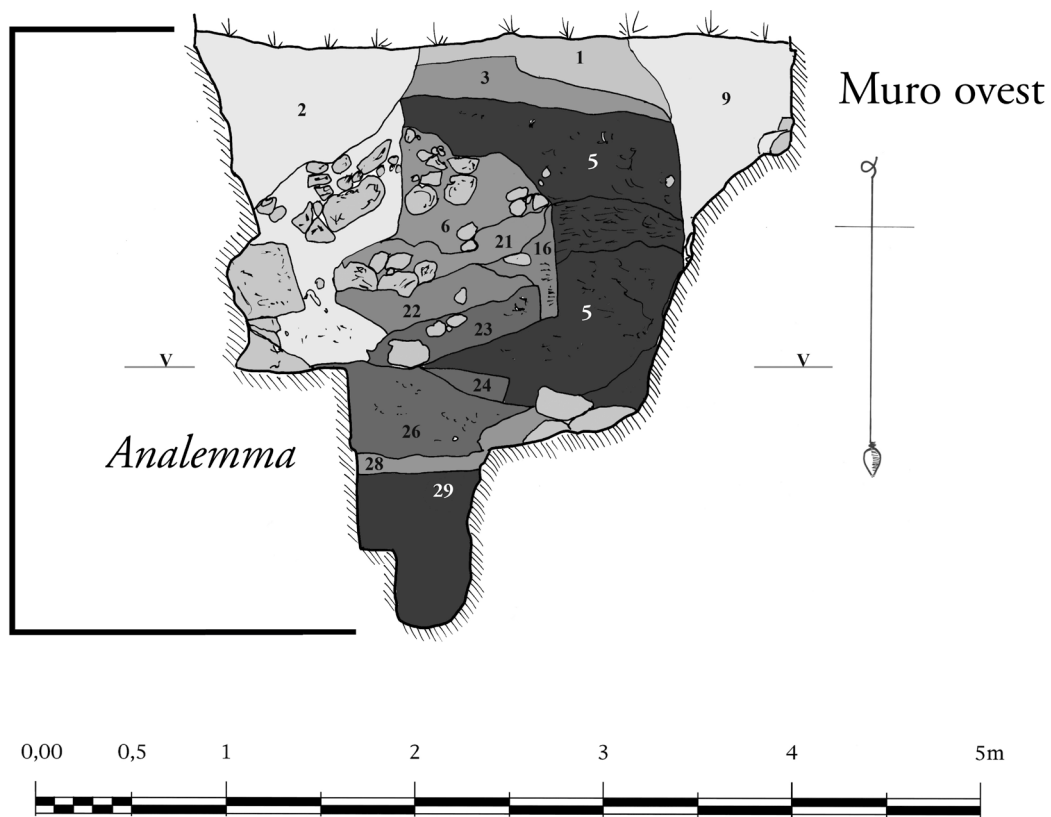


Fig. 4: Drawing of the trench section with west wall (drawing by C. Cassanelli; from Sarcone – Guerini 2022).



Fig. 5: Head of a terracotta figurine with high *polos*, AK21.3001.8 (photo SNS).



a



b

Fig. 6: Terracotta figurines from US 3003: a) fragment of a statuette with pectorals, AK20.3003.109; b) head of a terracotta figurine with *polos*, AK20.3003.107 (photos SNS).



a



b



d



c

Fig. 7: Terracotta figurines from US 3006: a) fragment of a female *protome*, AK20.3006.582; b) lower part of a female face, AK20.3006.593; c) head of a female statuette with *stephane*, AK21.3006.13; d) head of a female statuette with *polos*, AK20.3006.592 (photos SNS).



0 2 cm

Fig. 8: Fragment of a female face of terracotta figurine, AK20.3023.52 (photo SNS).