

# All the Wisdom of the East

Studies in Near Eastern Archaeology and History  
in Honor of Eliezer D. Oren

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# כל חכמת בני קדם

מחקרים בארכיאולוגיה ובהיסטוריה  
של המזרח הקרוב

לכבוד  
אליעזר ד' אורן

בעריכת  
מאיר גרובר  
שמואל אחיטוב  
גונר להמן  
צפורה טלשיר

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### *Cover illustration*

A decoration featuring the well-known 'palm-tree and ibex' motif on a pottery vessel from the end of the Late Bronze Age (13th century BCE) found at Tel Sera' (biblical Ziklag?) during the excavations conducted by Eliezer Oren.

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# The Temple of the Kothon at Motya, Sicily: Phoenician Religious Architecture from the Levant to the West

Lorenzo Nigro

## *1. Introduction*

### *1.1. Eliezer D. Oren at Motya and the discovery of the Temple of the Kothon*

Wherever I have been digging in the Near East, or simply, travelling for scholarly reasons (conferences, workshops, etc.) in Europe and the Near East, Eliezer D. Oren has appeared suddenly from a hill or behind a corner, as a presence always active, vigilant, stimulating with his penetrating humor. To this I was already accustomed, when in 2002 Rome La Sapienza University resumed archaeological investigations at Motya (with a team previously engaged at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho), the Phoenician foundation in the lovely island of Western Sicily, choosing a spot, the eastern side of the artificial basin known as the “kothon,” where two trenches cut by previous excavators (under the direction of Prof. B. S. J. Isserlin of the University of Leeds) had left unearthened a majestic structure built in local sandstone (“calcarenite”). It was, then, for me, amazing to apprehend that such trenches had been excavated in 1968 by a young Eliezer D. Oren, again surprisingly appearing on my excavation field, unexpectedly.<sup>1</sup> Much more unexpected was to discover that the ashlar structure emerging in Prof. Isserlin’s South Trench<sup>2</sup> was the monumental entrance to a huge temple, which has been thoroughly excavated during six excavation campaigns (2002-2007), and has been called the Temple of the Kothon. It is, thus, most appropriate to offer an overall presentation of this temple in this volume as homage to Prof. Oren.

### *1.2. Rome La Sapienza Excavations at Motya*

Rome La Sapienza Expedition to Motya resumed its field activity in 2002, after a nine year hiatus. The renewed excavation was intended as the continu-

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of brevity I do not mention the numerous common points touched upon in conferences and personal talks with a fruitful exchange of data and interpretative insights at the time of the excavation of the MB temple at Tell Abu Hureira (Tel Haror), which Prof. Oren carried out while Nicolò Marchetti and I were engaged at Ebla in the excavation of the square facing monumental Temple P2 (Matthiae 1990; 1993).

<sup>2</sup> *Mozia X*, 38-40, 68-75.

ation of the outstanding work of Antonia Ciasca, the scholar who devoted a large part of her life to the archaeology of Motya, uncovering the Tophet and a long stretch of the city-walls.<sup>3</sup> Excavation activities have been carried out in three different areas, in order to achieve the following aims:

- a) investigating the origins of the Phoenician foundation on the western slopes of the Acropolis (Area D), where several soundings enabled the excavation to reach the earliest layers of the Bronze and Iron Ages;
- b) establishing the architecture, stratigraphy and function of the Kothon, the built-up basin traditionally considered a “kothon”, i.e. an inner harbor, by digging on its eastern side and in the area of the South Gate (Area C), where – as stated above – a series of superimposed temples has been discovered;
- c) examining the urban history and topography by digging the West Gate and the related city-walls (Area F), where a huge defensive building flanking the gate has been brought to light, called the Western Fortress.

## 2. *Architecture and Stratigraphy of the Temple of the Kothon*

The main temple (Temple C1-C2), excavated almost completely after six campaigns, was erected 10 m east of the eastern quay of the basin (Figs. 1-2), over the ruins of an earlier sacred building (Temple C5; Nigro 2010), of which it retained the orientation and the overall layout, as the most recent results of the dig demonstrated. After the final destruction of Motya by Dionysios of Syracuse (397 BC), which of course affected drastically the temple and the neighbouring zones, the remains of the religious buildings were carefully dismantled and a sacred compound was set up over them, called Sanctuary C3.

The stratigraphy of the three superimposed temples (and the open area Sanctuary C3), which was connected with that of the artificial basin and of the South Gate Quarter excavated by the British Expedition, made it possible to reconstruct the history of the whole south-western quarter of the city from the earliest Phoenician settlement in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE to modern times (the Kothon remained in use as a salt producing pool [saltwork, “salina”] and as a fishing basin through Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Medieval and modern periods).<sup>4</sup>

Temple C5 (Phases 7-6) was founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and kept in use until the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when it suffered a violent destruction, also documented in other areas at Motya. It was reconstructed in a monumental shape (Temple C1, Phase 5), in which it remained until the first or the second decade of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when a further demolition caused a new reconstruction of the building (Temple C2, Phase 4), which remained in use until Dionysios’ final destruction of 397 BCE. Sanctuary

<sup>3</sup> Ciasca 1992; 1993; Nigro 2004; *Mozia X*, 7-15.

<sup>4</sup> *Mozia XI*, 20-59.



C3 (Phase 3) was set up over the ruins of the temple one year later and was apparently used until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

### 2.1. Overall plan of the Temple of the Kothon

We have still scanty data on Temple C5, except for its stratigraphic setting (see above), and for the identification of its northern wall, which is exactly under its successors of Temples C1-C2, demonstrating that the latter temples retained the same perimeter of the earliest sacred building. The basic plan of the Temple of the Kothon (C1-C2) adopted the scheme of the so-called “Four Room Building,” a typical device of Syro-Palestinian Iron Age public architecture,<sup>5</sup> which is characterised by three parallel rectangular spaces (with the central one usually larger than the two flanking it) and a major transversal room. Moreover, this module was designed so that the main entrance to the “Four Room Building” was located at the end of one of its long sides, while the lateral wings were commonly subdivided into regular rooms. The Temple of the Kothon was erected according to this planimetric scheme<sup>6</sup>. The overall interior dimensions of the building were 34 x 24 cubits (17.85 x 12.60 m) while the outer perimeter, including the eastern wing added in Phase 4, reached 37 x 26 cubits (19.30 x 13.65 m). The central space was an open court, where several cult installations were erected, while the two lateral wings hosted, respectively, (a) the main *cella* of the temple with a raised *adyton* on the north and (b) a vestibule and a second cult room on the south. To this central tripartite block two side wings had been juxtaposed on the short eastern and western sides, each long 24 cubits (12.6 m). The western wing opened towards the Kothon quay (Fig. 3), while the eastern wing (Fig. 4), which also hosted a stele and an obelisk, was connected to a second entrance looking east.

### 2.2. Architecture and building technique

The main supporting structure of the temple was based upon a module of 6 cubits (3.15 m), i.e. the module used for the displacement of sandstone squared pillars arrayed on the main perimeter and inner walls, and in the

<sup>5</sup> The plan of the so-called “Four Room Buildings” is a scheme variously adopted in Levantine public architecture during the Iron Age (Shiloh 1970; Wright 1985: 275-280; Nigro 1994: 203-291, 436-452; Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg 2006), also attested in religious architecture (Ottosson 1980: 66-71; see below § 4.3.). This plan probably descends from a classic layout of Palestinian domestic architecture in this period, that of the so-called “Four Room House” (Braemer 1982; Netzer 1992). The latter structure features three parallel long rooms with a transversal room behind their short sides covering the entire width of the house. Moreover, Levantine Iron II “Four Room Buildings” are characterized by the adoption of the ashlar masonry typical of the Phoenician tradition with dressed blocks regularly displaced on alternated courses (Shiloh 1979: 50-69; Stern 1992: 302-304).

<sup>6</sup> For an overall description of the Temple: Nigro 2009b: 255-265.

*intercolumni* of the two rows of pillars, which in Phase 5 divided the temple into two wings (northern and southern) and a central courtyard.<sup>7</sup> Temple C1 was erected after the destruction layer of the previous sacred building had been levelled and new foundation walls had been built at the same elevation in the central block of the building, with the western and eastern wings respectively a half cubit lower and a half cubit higher in respect of it. Consequently, it was possible to overcome the difference in elevation of around 1 cubit between the quay of the Kothon and the street facing the eastern façade of the temple.<sup>8</sup>

The foundation walls were built up in a continuous structure made of limestone slabs and sandstone boulders, regularly cut according to 1 ½ or 2 x 1 cubits,<sup>9</sup> carefully worked on their upper surface where stone pillars (usually sandstone blocks 1 x 3 cubits) and standing stone walls were set up. The superstructure was built over a certain height in mud-bricks of a distinguished orange color, detected in almost all of the room of the temple in the destruction layer.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.3. *The monumental gate and the other entrances to the temple*

The building had three entrances. The main gate, flanked by two half-columns or pilasters supporting two Proto-Aeolic capitals (see below), was on its southern side, opening towards the square between the temple and the South Gate. The second major gate was at the center of the eastern side and opened directly outside the sacred area on the main street connecting the Kothon to the Acropolis. A third door opened towards the Kothon eastern quay, through a porch added to the temple on its western side.

The main southern gate, which was in use during the whole life of the temple, was aligned with the South Gate (55 m far away),<sup>11</sup> and consisted of a raised threshold 2.8 m wide, made up with two huge blocks, flanked by two protruding pilasters, each supporting a Proto-Aeolic capital, of a type

<sup>7</sup> *Mozia XI*, 116-118, Figs. 2.157-2.162.

<sup>8</sup> Since at the center of the temple there was a sacred well, the elevation of the floors was very important in the planning and erection of the sacred building; a series of underground drains and channels connected the various cult installations and, especially, the central obelisk and the sacred well to the Kothon itself (see below).

<sup>9</sup> In some spots, for example in the south-western corner of the temple, a series of large limestone blocks cut from the local bedrock was placed; the same irregular boulders of local limestone were sometimes used in the foundation walls as an alternative to sandstone slabs (for example, along the northern foundation wall: *Mozia XI*, 97-99, Figs. 2.125-2.127).

<sup>10</sup> *Mozia XI*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> A large square occupied the free space between the Temple and the South Gate, up to the edge of the domestic quarter brought to light by the British Expedition (Isserlin 1970: 573-579; Isserlin and Taylor 1974, 50-68; Nigro and Lisella 2004), which has been newly investigated in the last two excavation campaigns (*Mozia XI*, plan IV, squares CnIX1, CoIX1); a GPR survey indicated the possible presence of other cult installations in this square.

with large central palmette and small volutes of possible Cypriote influx (Fig. 5).<sup>12</sup> Just inside the *antae* on both sides of the passage a couple of free-standing pillars conveyed a symbolic meaning, since they did not have a structural function, and they recall a typical feature of Canaanite/Phoenician sacred architecture.<sup>13</sup>

The door lintel was surmounted by an Egyptian gola, as it is indicated by some sparse fragments retrieved in the destruction layers, while the upper frame of the building was probably a double embolden lintel, to which a carved block found on the eastern quay of the Kothon seems to witness<sup>14</sup>. The reconstruction of the main entrance to the Temple of the Kothon is, thus, not so different from many representations of temple gates on Levantine clay *naiskoi*,<sup>15</sup> or better by a number of *ediculae* carved on Punic stelae, as clearly exemplified by specimens from Motya itself (Fig. 6).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Although the temple was fully dismantled after Dionysios' destruction of 397 BCE, its monumental southern entrance has been reconstructed thanks to the retrieval, in the sacred well in its central courtyard, of some architectural elements which belonged to it: in the filling within the well one Proto-Aeolic capital was found (*Mozia XI*, 72), together with the sandstone blocks of a pilaster (*Mozia X*, 68-70, Figs. 2.28-2.35), while the well mouth was ritually closed by a circular monument (erected in Sanctuary C3, Phase 3), at the center of which the base of the half-column was vertically standing, like a stele or a *signum memoriae* of the sacred device (*Mozia X*, 57-58, note 60, Figs. 2.19-2.20, 2.33, Pls. XIV-XV). About Proto-Aeolic capitals at Motya see: Nigro 2001-2003).

<sup>13</sup> The foremost forerunners of such pillars are the two bronze columns, called Yachin and Boaz, flanking the monumental entrance of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem according to the biblical description in I Kings 7:15-22; 2 Chron. 3:15-17; Busink 1970: 299-321). Equally famous were the two golden and emerald pillars described by Flavius Josephus standing on both sides of the entrance to the Zeus (Baal Shamin) Temple at Tyre (*C. Ap.* 1, 112-127); according to Herodotus who visited the Phoenician island (II, 44, 1-3), those pillars flanked the entrance to the Temple of Melqart. From a mere archaeological point of view, the nearest evidence of such devices of Canaanite/Phoenician temples is perhaps the well known pair of pillars attested to in the Orthostats Temple of Hazor (Otto 1980: 29-32, Fig. 5C-D1; Matthiae 1997: 138-139); another interesting antecedent may be the free-standing pillars without any static function discovered in the temple of Kamid el-Loz, in the Lebanese Beqa' (Matthiae 1986: 122-128; 1997, 118-119; Metzger 1991: 151-159, 209-212, Pls. 8:2, 9, 42-43). This long and firm tradition of Levantine religious architecture was, thus, transmitted also to the West, finding a number of new interpretations both in the Phoenician and Punic architectural language. A further example, perhaps much more meaningful in respect of the Temple of the Kothon of Motya, is offered by the very pillars with floral capital retrieved in the Temple of Astarte at Kouklia-Palaepaphos in Cyprus (Maier and Karageorghis 1984: 191, Figs. 176-177), which in respect of their dimensions and the carving technique recall the fragments found on both sides of the entrance to the former.

<sup>14</sup> Two more carved ashlar blocks mentioned by Isserlin (but non illustrated) may have belonged to the same monument (Isserlin 1971: 183-184).

<sup>15</sup> Several terracotta *naiskoi* illustrate the typical façade of the Phoenician temples, flanked by a pair of columns surmounted by Proto-Aeolic capitals supporting an Egyptian gola (e.g. *I Fenici*, 163, 589 [No. 34]).

<sup>16</sup> Some *ediculae* may be quoted as examples of temple fronts with pillars and capitals: stele S 285 (*Mozia VI*, 87-93, Pl. XLIX, 1-2, 115-116, n. 21, Pl. LXXIX, 2; Moscati and Uberti

#### 2.4. Temple C1 of Phase 5 (second half of 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

Structures of Temple C1 are partly concealed underneath or within the foundations of following Temple C2, and they have been explored in almost all the spots where later floors of Phase 4 were not preserved, and in a series of soundings excavated in selected points of the building, such as the vestibule, the corners of the main *cella*, the western wing; soundings basically aimed, however, at the investigation of the earliest sacred building of Phases 7-6 (Temple C5). The central block of the temple, with a somewhat square plan, was subdivided into three rectangular spaces on the east-west axis by a double row of pillars; in the center was a court, towards which the northern and southern wings opened (Fig. 7).<sup>17</sup> To this block an eastern and western wing were juxtaposed. The eastern wing, 8 cubits-wide (4.2 m), was accessible through a couple of doors symmetrically opened in the eastern side of the temple. It was connected with the central courtyard through a door in the south-eastern corner of the latter. The western wing, facing the Kothon, was conversely only 6 cubits wide (3.15 m) because, through a somewhat wide passage, it entered a porch opening towards the eastern quay of the Kothon. The flagstones flooring<sup>18</sup> of this wing was, in fact, directly connected with the limestone slabs pavement of the eastern quay of the basin, where the drain connected with the sacred well and the obelisk was inserted (Fig. 7).

In the central courtyard a series of cult installations were arrayed:<sup>19</sup> a sacred well, with a square mouth (with the corners oriented according to the north);<sup>20</sup> an obelisk, standing behind the well; and two stelae, the latter three free standing elements aligned on the middle axis of the courtyard (each stele was standing on a square base; Fig. 8). All monuments were connected with or incorporated holes for libations. From the holes at the foot of the obelisk a channel ran under the flooring and emerged on the quay surface, eventually flowing into the Kothon (Fig. 9). The northern wing of Temple C1 was characterized by the presence of a raised area at its eastern end, possibly indicating a cult focus. In the rear wall of the *cella* and against the northern face of a sandstone block enclosing the raised area to the west, two libation orifices suggested that a cult element was standing on the platform.

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1981, Pl. XLIX, n. 316); stelae *S 12* and *S 172* for the representation of a temple entrance with a betyl/obelisk inside (Moscatti and Uberti 1981: 181, Pl. XCIII, nn. 611 e 612); stele *S 128* for the representation of the façade with a three-betyl altar (Moscatti and Uberti 1981: 193, Pl. XCIII, n. 677); stele *S 257* for the representation of a priest worshipping a betyl or an obelisk (*Mozia VI*, 87-93, Pl. LXVII, 1; Moscatti and Uberti 1981: 243, Pl. CLXIV, 1, n. 922).

<sup>17</sup> *Mozia XI*, 56-57, plan VI.

<sup>18</sup> Underneath the flagstones floor of the western wing two foundation deposits in local "neck-ridge" jugs were discovered, including animal bones and sea shells.

<sup>19</sup> Cult installations in the courtyard of Temple C1 are more or less the same as those of Temple C2, except for some minor transformations (See below in the main text): *Mozia XI*, 105-110, Figs. 2.136-2.148.

<sup>20</sup> The well mouth was made of some slabs partially worked on their upper face (*Mozia X*, 79-80, Figs. 2.40-2.41).

The most meaningful characteristic of Temple C1 is the subdivision of the plan into three wings through the two rows of pillars, which finds several parallels in Levantine sacred buildings of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC (see below § 4.1.).

### 2.5. Temple C2 of Phase (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

During the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the Temple of the Kothon underwent a general reconstruction. The result of this reconstruction was to distinguish the main *cella* on the northern side of the central open cult space and to change the inner circulation among the various cult rooms and devices (Fig. 10). Floors were raised in all rooms, and the sacred installations arrayed in the central courtyard were re-organized: the easternmost stele was removed, and its square base with its foundation deposits<sup>21</sup> were concealed under the new floor, possibly because roughly at the middle of the eastern side of the courtyard a small podium was erected. This podium also delimited a raised platform in the north-eastern corner of the open space, perhaps destined to host a small throne.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the central installation was enlarged, with the stele in the corner of a square platform which had on its northern side, just behind the stele, orifices for libations connected with an underground drain<sup>23</sup>. The obelisk and the sacred well remained in use with the same displacement of the earlier phase, as well as the small platform on the eastern side of the former.

After the closing of the pillared hall, the northern main *cella* opened towards the central court through a monumental gate (with a monolithic threshold, facing the main temple entrance and the vestibule). In addition, it was fully refurbished in the interior, especially at its eastern end, where a raised *adyton* with an introducing step and two antae was built up, obliterating previous libation holes.<sup>24</sup>

The southern *cella*, accessible from the south-western corner of the central cult space, was provided with three lateral benches, possibly used as seats or daises for offerings, while a small sandstone block pierced for libations (*mundus*) was embedded into the floor in the north-western quadrant of the room (Fig. 11).<sup>25</sup> The cut-off neck of a Greek amphora, found nearby, was presumably used for pouring liquids underground.

Also the western wing of the temple was refurbished and given a new floor, covering the original flagstones pavement (Fig. 3). At the northern end of the room a cult device was set, with a small podium/altar built against the

<sup>21</sup> These deposits were buried in the corners of each installations (the sacred well, the obelisk, and two stelae), including numerous sea-shells (*Cerithium rupestre*).

<sup>22</sup> *Mozia XI*, 110, Figs. 2.146-2.147.

<sup>23</sup> *Mozia XI*, 107-108, Figs. 2.141-2.142.

<sup>24</sup> Some burnt traces in the middle of the hall indicated the presence of wooden cult furniture (*Mozia XI*, Fig. 2.133).

<sup>25</sup> *Mozia XI*, 111-116, Figs. 2.148-2.156.

eastern wall, and two jug bottoms embedded into the floor probably to be used for perfume libations (Fig. 12). The eastern wing was re-floored only in its southern half, where a stele or, more probably, a second obelisk stood.<sup>26</sup> In the northern half of the hall, another stele was set up on a rectangular basis (1 x 2 cubits)<sup>27</sup> placed in the middle of the room<sup>28</sup>, to which a second square slab (1 cubit by side) was adjoined (Fig. 4), according to a scheme adopted also in the central courtyard for the obelisk.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.5.1. *The eastern monumental entrance and the circular temenos*

The major transformation of the temple in Phase 4, however, affected the eastern side of the building. Here a monumental entrance was added to the pre-existing façade, so that the front of the temple protruded eastwards onto a street. This kind of *propyleum* included a central door flanked by a couple of orthostats, introducing into a vestibule, and to a second passage in the south-eastern corner room leading to the square south of the temple itself. This suggested that a temenos existed including the temple and the square south of it, which, actually, was successively identified for a length of more than 80 m. The temenos wall, of which so far only a small portion has been excavated, has a circular layout and encompasses the area immediately inside the South Gate to the Temple and, apparently (according to its circumference), also the whole Kothon (Fig. 14). If this is confirmed by future excavations, the functional relationship between the temple and the Kothon (together with the already proved structural and stratigraphic connections) will be definitely demonstrated.

The violent Syracusan attack of 397 BCE marked the tragic end of the Temple of the Kothon. The sacred area, however, was not abandoned: the ruins of the sacred building were carefully dismantled, collecting the obelisk and the stelae and other blocks from the various cult installations (Fig. 15) in a huge *favissa*. The destruction layers were razed, and directly over them an open cult place called Sanctuary C3 was set up, with several installations (altars, *bothroi*, *tannurs*), and in a bounded field several offerings were bur-

<sup>26</sup> This obelisk was removed together with its base in Phase 3c, when the destroyed Temple of the Kothon was carefully dismantled; the square pit and the ramp made for removing the monument are similar to the basement of the obelisk in the central courtyard of the temple.

<sup>27</sup> The rectangular slab exhibits a geometric incision consisting of a square (46 cm) flanked by two rectangles (46 x 23 cm), which recalls the overall plan of the building with a tripartite central sector and two side wings.

<sup>28</sup> It seems reasonable that a betyl or stele with a square section was standing upon this base, which was removed after the destruction of the Temple. In front of the monument, there was a square slab, like in the obelisk in the central courtyard. Two small rectangular holes in the crushed limestone flooring of the hall near the base suggest the presence of mobile furnishings, or votive pillars, removed during the sack of the building.

<sup>29</sup> At a short distance from the obelisk base, a bronze nail with a lead revetment (Fig. 13) was found fixed into the floor, curiously aligned with the other cult installation of the temple in the central courtyard and again displaced along the median east-west axis of the building.



ied. Sanctuary C3 was in use for the entire 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, thus testifying to how deeply rooted was the religious vocation of the area of the Kothon<sup>30</sup>.

### 3. *The Spring of the Kothon and the relationship between the Temple and the Kothon*

Six seasons of excavations in Area C (2002-2007) made it possible to thoroughly reconstruct the architecture and stratigraphy of the Temple. However, some more general interpretative problems remained unsolved, such as determining the orientation of the sacred building, inconsistent both in respect of the South Gate, the city-walls, the road network, and, especially, in respect of the Kothon, with which, nonetheless, the Temple proved to be strictly linked.

A new survey of the Kothon confirmed that the built-up basin was completely enclosed by a continuous wall made of ashlar also on its southern side, where it seems nowadays to be connected with the channel across the city-wall (a dock) already excavated by the British Expedition, through a second oblique channel (actually a series of drains added when the pool was turned into a salt producing device or “salina”). The Kothon was instead a closed basin with a perimeter wall built up all together.<sup>31</sup> It measures 51.97 m x 36.75 m,<sup>32</sup> i.e., 99 x 70 cubits by 0.525 m.<sup>33</sup> These dimensions suggest that

<sup>30</sup> On the cult compound erected over the razed ruins of the Temple of the Kothon after the Dionysios’ destruction, called Sanctuary C3, see: *Mozia X*, 45-51, 53-67, Figs. 2.11, 2.14-2.27, *Mozia XI*, 39-47, 60-92; Figs. 2.79-2.116. The illustration of architecture and cult installations of Sanctuary C3 is beyond the goals of the present article; numerous finds from the votive field hosted in the central area of Sanctuary, however, provide a wide and coherent inventory of offerings (including animal bones, sea-shells, metal objects and raw minerals, small pottery vessels, mainly Black Ware), illustrating cult activities performed in this religious area, hinting a deity connected with subterranean word and waters. For a general presentation of these votive deposits see: *Mozia XI*, 73-86, Figs. 2.98-2.112, pls. CXXXII-CXCII.

<sup>31</sup> Isserlin had already noticed that, at least in its latest phase of use, the channel apparently connecting the Kothon to the Lagoon in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, was no more accessible (Isserlin 1970: 565; 1971: 184-185). On the southern wall of the basin, Isserlin, finally, states “the impression gained so far is that except for the western corner, most of the south wall is of one period” (Isserlin 1971, 185). New investigations after the emptying of the Kothon have shown that the southern wall of the basin, in its lower courses, is part of the original unique ashlar structure enclosing completely the pool from all its sides (Fig. 16). Moreover, we stress the fact that the whole perimeter of the basin is made of stretchers blocks, without a single header, as it is common almost in every Phoenician harbor (as it is exemplary attested to in the dock which constitutes the outer channel included in the city-walls, only secondarily connected with the so-called Kothon).

<sup>32</sup> These dimensions derive from a new careful survey of the monument carried out in the 2005 season; they only slightly differ from those recorded by J. Whitaker (1921: 190), “c. 51 x 37 m,” which B. Isserlin reproduced (1971: 178), and from those provided by J. du Plat Taylor of 51 x 35.5 m (du Plat Taylor 1964: 91).

<sup>33</sup> The short side of the Kothon is 70 cubits (36.75 m) long, a dimension which generates the entire project, roughly corresponding to 125 Attic ft. (37 m), while the long side of

the rectangular basin was meant to be based upon a square module of 70 cubits, corresponding to the short side of the pool, and obtaining the long side from the projection of the diagonal of this square (so to produce two lengths, both of which were multiples of the cubit, which was 0.525 m). The same design was adopted for the project of the temple: the plan of the original four-room module was generated by projecting the diagonal of the central square (made up by the three rectangular spaces), and obtaining a building with a length of 37 cubits, roughly half of the short side of the Kothon (Fig. 17).<sup>34</sup>

A new decisive element, which sheds light on our understanding of the Temple, was discovered during the 2005 season. At that time, the water was emptied from the artificial basin in order to proceed to the excavation and survey of its eastern quay.<sup>35</sup> Two weeks after the basin was completely emptied and a flow of fresh water sprung out from the northern wall of the pool (Fig. 18), where a series of blocks protrudes from the edge of the perimeter wall for a length of 7.83 m (15 cubits)<sup>36</sup>. This device proved to be the structural element through which fresh water flowed into the pool (Fig. 19). A basic achievement, obtained by geological investigations and paleo-environmental studies<sup>37</sup> in the Marsala Lagoon,<sup>38</sup> where Motya lies, was the discovery that the sea level was 0.8 m lower in antiquity,<sup>39</sup> allowing fresh water

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the basin, with a length of 99 cubits (51.97 m), coincides with 175 Attic ft. Isserlin (1971: 184) noticed that the general dimensions of the Kothon roughly correspond to the overall area of the temenos of the Temple of "Cappiddazzu," with an extension of around an *actus* of 120 Attic ft. Isserlin suggested that a Greek canon had been used while planning Motya in its second monumental reconstruction. However, the dimensions upon which this interpretation was based do not fit the Attic *actus*. In any case, the two metrologic systems, the Greek/Siceliote and the Phoenician ones, are meaningfully integrated in the monument, as a further proof of the capabilities of cultural assimilation of Motya ancient inhabitants.

<sup>34</sup> In the plan project, however, what seems really meaningful is that both monuments were realized using the same basic unit, the so-called Pharaonic or "royal" Egyptian cubits of 0.525 m: Isserlin and du Plat Taylor 1974: 93. In the second reconstruction of the Temple of the Kothon (Temple C2 of Phase 4, 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) the Punic cubit of 0.46 m is also used.

<sup>35</sup> The Kothon was partly emptied by J. Whitaker in its western part, while the perimeter structure, in the corners and in some spots of the northern and southern sides, were explored by the British Expedition directed by B. S. J. Isserlin (1971: 184-186). New investigations were made possible thanks to a pump generously provided by Mr. Dali from the saltworks facing Motya (Nigro 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Such a protruding structure had been already noticed in the past, and it was interpreted as a device useful to dock boats (Isserlin 1970: 565; 1971, 185, Pl. XXIXb; Famà 1995: 178; Tusa 2004: 448).

<sup>37</sup> Tusa 2004.

<sup>38</sup> The observation of numerous fish and birds of various kinds concentrating in the Kothon and in its immediate neighbourhood, as already observed by Whitaker (1921: 190), indicated the presence of a flow of fresh water.

<sup>39</sup> The problem of water level was immediately apparent to scholars as soon as J. Whitaker published the results of his investigation of this question at the Kothon (Isserlin 1971: 179).



present in the underground marl strata to erupt.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, geological investigations demonstrated that the sacred well in the central cult space of the Temple received fresh water from the same source which flooded the pool<sup>41</sup>. The two monuments were thus connected by an underground system, which can be easily related to classic ideological conceptions of the Phoenicians. The sacred pool and the sacred well were both communicating directly with the world of underground waters.

#### *4. The Temple, The Kothon and the Phoenician origins of Motya*

Recent discoveries at Motya by Rome “La Sapienza” University, thus, allow us to reassess the south-western quarter of the island in the light of the religious architectural tradition to which the Temple of the Kothon is ascribable<sup>42</sup>.

##### *4.1. Water in cult places of Phoenicia*

The deep relationship which links Mediterranean cult places and water sources, especially in the Phoenician homeland,<sup>43</sup> descends from one of the most typical Near Eastern religious conceptions. Since underworld water, in the Levant, as well as in earlier Mesopotamia, is always the water from which the world had its beginning in the Creation, and it is from the same water that, by a divine act, human civilization emerged, the presence of such water is, thus, sufficient to give a place the status of sacred space,<sup>44</sup> making it, at the same time, suitable for human settlement, and preferably for the rise of a city and the seat of the temple, house of the god.<sup>45</sup> Such a trivially simplified conception should point to what was part of the Phoenician “Weltanschauung”, since the times of early urbanization. It seems, thus, not by chance that the major Phoenician cities and their main sanctuaries arose directly over (as in the extraordinary case of Byblos), or in direct connection with important water sources (Tyre with Ras el-‘Ain, Sidon with Nahar al-Awali and Bostan

<sup>40</sup> The observation of quays and docks all around the island of Motya (including the so-called “underwater causeway”), all of them nowadays submerged, confirmed the fact that the current water-level in the Marsala Lagoon is around 0.8-1.0 higher than in antiquity (Isserlin 1971: 179; Tusa 2004, 450, Fig. 9).

<sup>41</sup> Nigro 2009a: 552, Figs. 306-307, 319.

<sup>42</sup> Nigro 2009c.

<sup>43</sup> Groenewoud 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Lundquist 1983: 27.

<sup>45</sup> In Mesopotamia, moreover, divine presence is expressed by the emergence of the temple – the house of the god – from the primeval waters (Matthiae 1994: 7-11).

esh-Sheikh, Arwad with Amrit, etc.).<sup>46</sup> Indeed, several other cult places were located near water reservoirs or rivers (such as 'Afqa).<sup>47</sup>

Byblos, in particular, since the earliest origins of the settlement,<sup>48</sup> was focused on the central source and the nearby "sacred lake", located in between the two major temples of the city, that of Balaat Gebal and the so-called "Temple en L,"<sup>49</sup> successively reconstructed as the Obelisks Temple<sup>50</sup>.

Special attention to water sources and their special relationship with sacred places and the city, continued in the Levant also in the Iron Age, and it was transmitted to the Western Mediterranean region during the Phoenician expansion. In the latter enterprise attention to the geomorphological setting of new foundations played a decisive role.<sup>51</sup> For sailors the availability of fresh water was so important as to become a basic factor of choice alongside of other typical features of the Phoenician landscape (coastal lagoons, spurs overlooking a bay, river mouths, etc.)<sup>52</sup>. From this perspective, the water source springing out on the southern shore of Motya<sup>53</sup> was probably one of the more attractive reasons for the Phoenician settlement in the island of the Marsala Lagoon.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>46</sup> In the case of Amrit, it seems important to stress that the sanctuary is directly connected with the source of *Naba' el-Tell* (Dunand and Saliby 1985: 4: Fig. 2); the strict link with the island city of Arwad is also known from ancient sources (Elayi 1982: 88).

<sup>47</sup> Rouvier 1900.

<sup>48</sup> The earliest sacred building at Byblos (the *Enceinte Sacrée*) arose just aside the central well, already at the end of Early Bronze IA (around 3300 BCE; "Énéolithique Récent", according to M. Dunand's terminology; *Byblos V*, 235-241, Fig. 143, Pl. J,c; Dunand 1982: 195; Nigro 2007a: 1-3, 26-31; Sala 2007: 48-58).

<sup>49</sup> When Byblos reached the status of fortified city, in the first half of the 3<sup>d</sup> millennium BCE (*Byblos I*, 288-289; Jidejian 1968, 15-21; Saghih 1983: 129-132; Wright 1985, 38-39), thanks to the special relationships established with Pharaonic Egypt, its center remained the sacred well.

<sup>50</sup> *Byblos II*, 644-652, Fig. 767; Finkbeiner 1981; Saghih 1983: 14-25.

<sup>51</sup> Bernardini 2003b: 115-116; 2005.

<sup>52</sup> A good example is the usual locations of Melqart's and Astarte's temples in the Mediterranean: Bernardini 2003a: 112-119.

<sup>53</sup> Isserlin had already stressed that the area of the Kothon possibly was a natural depression, corresponding to a small inlet of the island (Isserlin 1971, 185); hence, this favorable landscape probably attracted the earliest Phoenicians to settle just aside the spring (Nigro 2007b).

<sup>54</sup> This is not the place to illustrate zooarchaeological analyses systematically carried out by "La Sapienza" Expedition, which provided a wide set of data (*Mozia XI*, 521-532), pointing out that fish (tuna fish, mullet, etc., as well as wild animals (ducks and other birds, but also ungulates, such as deer), had a non-marginal role in the local diet, showing the intrinsic natural richness of the environment of the Marsala Lagoon. Another basic element which prompted the Phoenician settlement at Motya surely was the easy-going relationship established with the local communities of the Elymes (Falsone 1988, 43-45), who were able to offer the Phoenician colonies a wide range of agricultural products in a favourable exchange system (Tusa and Morris 2004).

#### 4.2. *The Obelisks Temple of Byblos and Ma'abed di Amrit*

The Levantine character of the Temple of the Kothon is further demonstrated by comparing it with some illustrious Phoenician sanctuaries.<sup>55</sup> The obelisk in the central court of the temple recalls the renown and earlier Temple of the Obelisks in Byblos (Fig. 20), which, together with the various alignments of obelisks and betyls, comprised a sacred well,<sup>56</sup> possibly related to libation activities. A common element with the Temple of the Obelisks is the displacement of betyls and stelae on alignments possibly depending on astral symbols;<sup>57</sup> these vertical elements were discarded and accumulated in a *favissa* in Byblos,<sup>58</sup> exactly as it happened in the Temple of the Kothon.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Some years ago, Paolo Matthiae, starting from the case of Sardinia (Perra 1998: 8), outlined a general difficulty in the identification of the oriental roots of Phoenician and Punic sacred architecture in the Mediterranean, wishing that new finds might help in this respect. His expectations were possibly confirmed by the discovery of the Temple of the Kothon at Motya in Sicily.

<sup>56</sup> *Byblos II*, Fig. 767.

<sup>57</sup> The obelisk and the stelae aligned with it, thus, represent typical oriental features of the Temple of the Kothon. The erection of stelae and betyls was common in Pre-Classical Levantine cult places, as also the Biblical sources testify. *Inter alia*, and without the needed textual and exegetic warnings, one may list some renowned descriptions found in the Old Testament, starting from the stele erected by Jacob after his agreement with Laban (Gen. 31:45) and the twelve stelae erected at Gilgal (Josh. 4:1-9, 20); the famous stele in the Shechem Temple (Josh. 24:27; Stager 2003); or the *massebôt* and the betyls, more in general worshipped in the Canaanite temples (1 Kgs. 14:23), against which Hezekiah's and Josiah's religious reforms were launched (2 Kgs. 18:4; 23:4-20). According to Deut. 27:1-8 and Josh. 8:30-35 these stelae were sometimes plastered and inscribed. Sometimes they were erected in connection with an ancestor cult, as in the case of those standing upon Rachel's Tomb (Gen. 35:20). In other cases a stele was set up at the foundation of a sanctuary, as in the case of Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22). This tradition, largely documented in Syria and Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages (Graesser 1972; Wagner 1980: 112-117; Nigro 1996), was preserved until the Hellenistic and Roman Periods; in the Persian Period, for example, in the sanctuary of the harbour of Tell Sukas a sacrificial pit was associated to a betyl (Rijs 1979: 46). The continuity of the betyls cult is exemplarily illustrated by a coin of Macrinus (217 d.C.) found in Byblos, which shows the temple with a sacred precinct and an obelisk/betyl in the middle (Jidejian 1968, Fig. 121). Another meaningful comparison for the obelisk and the stelae in the Temple of the Kothon is, perhaps, represented by the Astarte Temple at Kouklia and Palaepaphos in Cyprus, where a monolithic basalt stone was worshipped (Maier and Karageorghis 1984: Figs. 65-67, 81-82).

<sup>58</sup> *Byblos II*, Fig. 1007 (the *favissa* containing dismantled betyls and obelisks is visible in the plan of the *Temple en "L"* of the Early Bronze Age, due to the arbitrary excavation method adopted by Dunand). Some of the so-called obelisks present square hollows on their vertical faces, which were interpreted as niches for bronze statuettes of deities, of the types well known in Phoenicia (this kind of small niche is also attested in stelae, as exhibited by some specimens from the Tophet at Motya: Moscati and Uberti 1981: 133-134, Fig. 12, Pl. XLIX, n. 316). Similar hollows are also present in Middle Assyrian stelae from Assur (Andrae 1977: 145-151, Figs. 121-124), where they sometimes contained small inscriptions. Phoenician stelae might have hosted small inscription or dedications inscribed on mobile supports, such as metal foils, then folded and buried in the temple area.

<sup>59</sup> *Mozia XI*, 67-68, Fig. 2.90.

In any case, if one is looking at Phoenicia in search for cult places related to water, the temple most strikingly similar to the Temple of the Kothon in Motya is the so-called Ma'abed of Amrit (Fig. 21), ancient Marathos, in Syria.<sup>60</sup> One must first take into consideration some general correspondences between the two religious complexes: they both were erected in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE; they both were realized by cutting and modelling bedrock with the addition of ashlar structures;<sup>61</sup> they both are centred on a rectangular pool with the corners oriented according to the cardinal points;<sup>62</sup> in both cases the pool was connected with a water source and some other structures.<sup>63</sup> The two sacred pools exhibit similar dimensions: at Motya the Kothon is 99 x 70 cubits of 0.52 m (52 x 36.75 x 2 m), while at Amrit the basin measures 85 x 70 cubits of 0.55 m (46.75 x 38.5 x 2.5 m). The Ma'abed is connected with the spring of Naba' el-Tell through a channel;<sup>64</sup> at the middle of its northern side a structure made of blocks protrudes towards the pool, probably serving as a dock for the boat of the priests to reach the shrine in the center of the basin.<sup>65</sup> The similar protruding structure visible on the northern side of the Kothon at Motya was never fully excavated, and it was, thus, not possible to establish its function.<sup>66</sup>

Two features of the Ma'abed are not apparently present at Motya: the porch surrounding the basin and the central shrine. However, excavations at Motya never emptied the basin completely so that it is impossible to know if there was a central structure similar to the shrine of Amrit.<sup>67</sup> A series of

<sup>60</sup> The similarities between the Kothon at Motya and the Ma'abed of Amrit were stressed for the first time by P. Mingazzini (1968: 105-112) with special attention (with many references not always coherent) to the waters cult in Syria (especially based upon the well known description by Lucian of the cult performed in Hierapolis: *De Syria Dea*, XIII) and in North Africa; see also: Stocks 1937; Seyrig 1972.

<sup>61</sup> Isserlin 1971: 183; Stern 1992.

<sup>62</sup> Note that the north in the detailed plan of the pool (Dunand and Saliby 1985, Pl. II) is wrong, as it is clearly shown by the comparisons with the north in the general topographic map of the site (Dunand and Saliby 1985, Fig. 2; see Fig. 18).

<sup>63</sup> At Amrit recent excavations on the nearby tell revealed a major building built of ashlar blocks, where a votive deposit with six *situlae* and a statuette of a crouching figure was found (al-Maqdissi 2007).

<sup>64</sup> This channel led the waters into a cave (on the eastern side of the basin) and from the latter into the pool. Another branch of the channel runs along the eastern and southern edges of the pool, possibly to be used in ritual acts (libations and ablutions): Dunand and Saliby 1985, 15, Pls. VIII, XII, 1 e XIII, 2, Fig. 22; this channel may explain why that connecting the sacred well to the Kothon at Motya emerged on the eastern quay of the latter.

<sup>65</sup> Dunand and Saliby 1985, 31-34, Pls. XXIX-XXXI.

<sup>66</sup> Isserlin 1971: 179; a transversal trench to the northern perimeter of the Kothon was excavated by the British archaeologists behind the protruding structure, achieving the identification of a sandy layer that was considered a rest of the paleo-shore of the island (Isserlin 1971: 186).

<sup>67</sup> Whitaker's excavations carried out the complete emptying of the outermost part of the channel in correspondence of the city-wall and the partial removal of the mud from the pool in the western half (Whitaker 1921: 190-192).

architectural fragments found on the Kothon quay (carved blocks with borders and *golae*) may, in facts, have belonged to a structure erected in the center of the pool, and not only to the nearby temple as surmised up to now.

#### 4.3. *Levantine elements in the Temple of the Kothon: from Kition to Ekron*

The plan of the Temple of the Kothon, and especially of its original central nucleus, finds meaningful parallels in the series of buildings ascribed to the so-called “Four Room Building” type, a model which may be connected to the Cypriote and Aegean component of Phoenician architectural tradition. The earliest example so far known of such buildings is the Temple of Astarte at Kition. In the sacred complex excavated by V. Karageorghis<sup>68</sup> and dating back to the Late Bronze Age, Temple 1 (Fig. 22) gives the best exemplification of the planimetric typology: the tripartite plan, the inner proportions and overall dimensions (27 x 18 m) are very similar to those of the Temple of the Kothon (Fig. 23). Both sacred buildings, in their original architectural shape, were subdivided into three naves, with a transversal wing juxtaposed on one short side, and the entrance at the end of the southern nave. There is, however, a basic difference: in Temple 1 at Kition the central space is a roofed nave, while in the Temple of the Kothon at Motya it is a courtyard.<sup>69</sup>

In Cyprus another important building offers many comparative elements for the Temple of the Kothon, i.e. the Temple of Aphrodite at Kouklia Palaepaphos, a sanctuary renown in classical sources, also in use from the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. According to its excavator the original temple of 12<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE was a tripartite building with two rows of pillars (Figs. 24-25), where a betyl was placed, a conic volcanic stone (Fig. 26), still portrayed on coins in the Roman period<sup>70</sup>. Sanctuary I at Palaepaphos and its cult installations are, thus, fully comparable in conception and dimensions to those of the Temple of the Kothon.

Moving to the Southern Levant, and especially to Palestine, the scheme of the “Four Room Building” has been detected, with various adaptations, in two cult places of Megiddo, respectively called Building 2081 (stratum V, mid of 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE),<sup>71</sup> and Building 338 (stratum IV, second half of 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century BCE). The latter shows a series of long rectangular rooms juxta-

<sup>68</sup> Karageorghis 1981.

<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, it is perhaps not superfluous to stress that at the beginning Karageorghis, basing upon excavation data, considered the central room of the Kition temple as a courtyard and the transversal wing, preceded by two pillars, as the *sancta sanctorum*; only successively he accepted the reconstruction of the temple roofing with raised ceiling over the central nave put forward by O. Callot, and interpreted the transversal wing as a deposit for votive and cult objects instead as a *cella* (Karageorghis and Demas eds. 1985: 165-239; Karageorghis 2002, Fig. 218).

<sup>70</sup> For a general presentation of this sanctuary: Maier and Karageorghis 1984, 81-102.

<sup>71</sup> Loud 1948: 45-46, Fig. 388; Kempinski 1989: 91-92, 126-127, Fig. 40:14.

posed, one of which had a row of pillars in the middle which were interpreted as stelae.<sup>72</sup>

More clearly and possibly easier to be connected with a possibly Cypriote forerunner is the example represented by the so-called Southern Temple at Beth Shan (Fig. 27).<sup>73</sup> This building, traditionally attributed to Lower Stratum V, but more convincingly to be ascribed to the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE rebuilt city (Upper Stratum VI),<sup>74</sup> is an exception also in Beth Shan, where it takes the place of a previous building,<sup>75</sup> inserted into the residential quarter of the Egyptian officers in Beth Shan.<sup>76</sup> Some distinctive finds in it, such as the terracotta cult stands,<sup>77</sup> point to a Philistine (or more widely western/Aegean) component in the worshippers of this temple, settled in Beth Shan from the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE (the same who used the well known terracotta sarcophagi found in the Northern Cemetery).<sup>78</sup> In this case, it seems meaningful, in respect of the Temple of the Kothon, that the lateral location of the main *cella* of the temple, hosted in two rooms of the northern wing of the sacred building.

To the same Palestinian tradition of the tripartite temple may be attributed, as convincingly suggested by J. Kamlah,<sup>79</sup> Temple 650 at Khirbet el-Muqanna, Philistine Ekron, a building erected some centuries later in respect of the examples mentioned above, which testifies to the persistence of this architectural model until the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>80</sup> Temple 650 not only is com-

<sup>72</sup> The interpretation of Building 338 is uncertain (for a synthesis of differing positions: Nigro 1994: 237-238). Its discoverer, Gottlieb Schumacher, interpreted it as a shrine (Schumacher 1908, 110-124, Pl. XXXV); later, the exploration of the building was completed by the Chicago Oriental Institute archaeologists (Fisher 1929: 68-74; Guy 1931: 18-25), who considered it a fort or a residency (May 1935, 4-11, Pls. I-VII, X, XIII; Lamon and Shipton 1939: 47-59, Figs. 49, 120); V. Fritz (1983: 25-27, Fig. 18) and A. Kempinski (1989: 165-166) ascribed it to the typology of "Four Room Buildings".

<sup>73</sup> Rowe 1940: 22-30, Pls. III, X; Mazar 1993b: 219-222; see also Burdajewicz 1990: 56-57.

<sup>74</sup> James 1966: 140-144; Weippert 1988: 293, 363-364. Successively, A. Mazar has convincingly proposed to ascribe the temple to Upper Stratum VI (Mazar 1993a: 228-229).

<sup>75</sup> This is the temple of Stratum VII e Lower Stratum VI (Rowe 1940: 6-12, Pls. V-VII).

<sup>76</sup> In the forecourt the two famous stelae of Sethi I and Ramses II were found, as well as a full size statue of Ramses III, and several sacred furnishings, testifying to the continuation of the Pharaonic cult also during the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE at Beth Shan (Mazar 1993b: 220-221).

<sup>77</sup> Fitzgerald 1930, Pl. XIV, 3; James 1966: 39; Mazar 1993a.

<sup>78</sup> Oren 1973: 101-150. It is possible that these were the same Aegean mercenaries (from Caria) integrated into the Philistine cultural *milieu* (Stern 2000; Betancourt 2000 with previous bibliography).

<sup>79</sup> Kamlah 2003.

<sup>80</sup> The interpretation of this temple has been perhaps misled by the attempt to ascribe it to the realm of Neo-Assyrian provincial architecture, based upon its dating and the general shape of the complex which includes it (Gitin 1997: 92; 2000: 564-565). However, from a deeper analysis, evidence of a strong Phoenician influence (Kamlah 2003: 112-115) emerges in the temple as well as in other contemporary findings from Ekron (for example the numerous silver hoard, also including typical basket earrings [Gitin and Golani 2001], or the important Egyptian finds from the temple itself: Gitin 2004: 71-72, Fig. 5.8-5.9). The architecture of Temple 650 seems, nonetheless, somewhat hybrid, with a Levantine temple



parable for the plan (note that the main entrance to the complex was from the south) and the dimensions (Fig. 28),<sup>81</sup> but also it shows several cult elements similar to those of the Temple of the Kothon: the presence of two basins on both sides of the entrance, pointing at lustral activities.

The Temple of Ekron was connected with a porch too, having a series of rooms connected with it. Of outstanding interests are finds from the latter temple, showing strict relationships between the Philistines and the Phoenicians at a religious and cultural level: the dedicatory inscription of the temple<sup>82</sup> and some *ostraca* (inscribed in Phoenician) quoting the gods Anat, Asherat and Baal<sup>83</sup> with the sovereign Pady (also known from Neo-Assyrian sources).<sup>84</sup> The four silver hoards found in the sacred area, moreover, including some classic pieces of Phoenician jewellery, such as basket earrings and *udjat* eyes,<sup>85</sup> and for the weight system adopted,<sup>86</sup> not only testify to the Levantine *koiné* in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, under Neo-Assyrian control, but they also recall the numerous metallic finds from the Temple of the Kothon at Motya.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, a wheel-made female terracotta figurine found in the

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type included within a provincial Neo-Assyrian complex (Gitin 2004: 69-70, Fig. 5.6). It may be useful to recall, on the one hand, that in the inscription found in the temple *cella*, the king who dedicates the building to the feminine deity Ptgyh (possibly a non-Semitic epithet of Astarte, appearing in her winged iconography [a kind of iconography also typical of Assyrian Ishtar] standing on a lion in a silver pendant also retrieved in Ekron: Gitin and Golani 2001, Fig. 2.11) bears the name 'kyš, identified with "Ikausu son of Padi" mentioned in the same inscription and known from Neo-Assyrian annals (Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997); on the other hand, at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, not such a long time before the foundation of the temple, Cyprus had been definitely annexed to the Assyrian empire by Sargon II. It seems, thus, not surprising that Phoenician (Cypro-Phoenician) and Assyrian aspects appear simultaneously in a Philistine/Phoenician religious context on the Levantine coast. Moreover, once the inscription from the temple has been considered, we conclude from palaeography, orthography and syntactic construction that it is "predominantly Phoenician" (Gitin, Dothan and Naveh 1997: 12-16). The inscription is, therefore, a further witness that Phoenician cultural influence extended in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the whole Levant. These data, thus, support the comparison between Temple 650 at Ekron and the Temple of the Kothon at Motya.

<sup>81</sup> The only difference in respect to the plan model so far illustrated is the location of the entrance to the temple, which is on the short side opposite to the *cella* at Ekron. This may be easily explained as an outcome of Neo-Assyrian influence (Kamlah 2003: 108-112); in the meantime it has to be recalled that the Temple of the Kothon had also a monumental entrance on each short side, one looking the Kothon on the west side, the other opening on the street to the east.

<sup>82</sup> Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997; Gitin 2004: 72-76, Fig. 5.10.

<sup>83</sup> Gitin 1993: 250-253.

<sup>84</sup> In the case of Baal, this deity is mentioned in a joint dedication with the king Padi (also known from Neo-Assyrian sources, see above): Gitin and Cogan 1999.

<sup>85</sup> Gitin and Golani 2001: 43, Fig. 2.12.

<sup>86</sup> Gitin and Golani 2001, Table 2.1.

<sup>87</sup> *Mozia XI*, 75-88, Pls. CXXXII-CXCII.

temple *cella* at Ekron reminds a distinguished Phoenician-Punic type known in Western Mediterranean especially at Motya, Carthage, and elsewhere<sup>88</sup>.

#### 4.4. *The Temple of the Kothon and the diffusion of the Levantine religious architectural tradition*

Architecture and finds in Area C at Motya make it possible to include the Temple of the Kothon in the very realm of Phoenician religious architecture, which embraces some of the major Levantine temples of the first half of the first millennium BCE. On the one hand, it supports the Phoenician origin of the tripartite plan of a building achieved by means of pillars (such a type of sacred buildings has a major forerunner in the hypostyle hall of the Baalat Gebal Temple at Byblos).<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, evidence suggests that the foundation of the Temple of the Kothon occurred together with that of the city itself, in a favorable spot of the island, where a water source came to light, also allowing to reconsider the function of the Kothon itself. The latter is now to be interpreted as a sacred pool instead of a salt producing device or a fish pond.<sup>90</sup> Data from renewed excavations by Rome La Sapienza University seem to corroborate such an interpretation, even though one has to wait for the complete excavation of the sacred area and the pool to put forward and to document an overall explanation for all of the monuments involved. However, on the basis of the information gathered so far, it is possible to affirm that the Temple of the Kothon shows the strong cultural unity and continuity of Syro-Palestinian, Canaanite, and Phoenician religious architecture, which also spread through the entire Mediterranean region from the East to the West.

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<sup>88</sup> Moreover, in general, it seems meaningful at Motya, as like as at Ekron, the presence of Egyptian and Egyptianizing objects in the sacred area, among which a Pharaonic green-stone vessel and an *Egyptian Blue* scarab.

<sup>89</sup> Saghih 1983, 42-43, Pls. X, XII.

<sup>90</sup> *Mozia X*, 35-40; *Mozia XI*, 20-45, 125-128, Figs. 2.174-2.176.



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Fig. 1: Aerial view of the south-western quarter of the island of Motya with the Kothon, the nearby Temple and the South Gate.

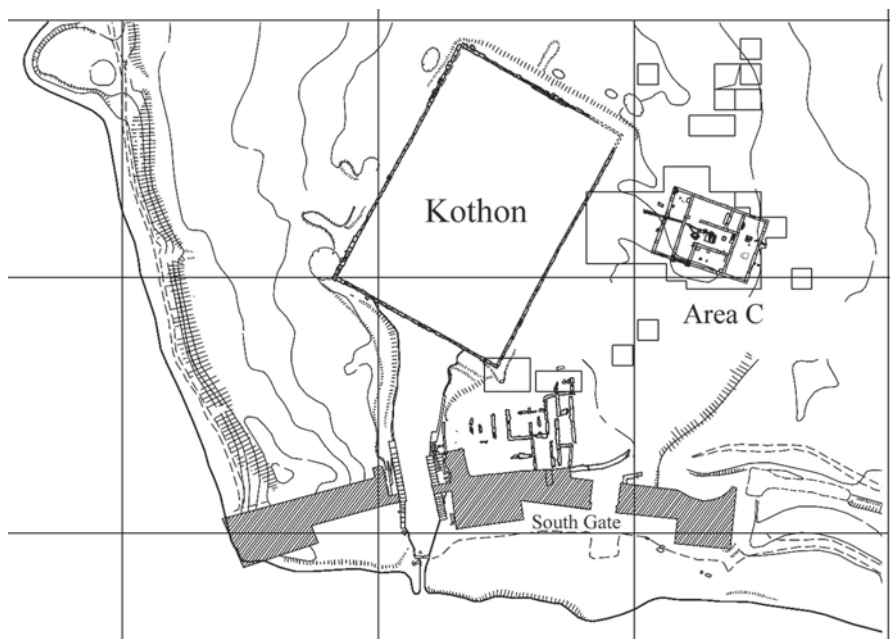


Fig. 2: Plan of the south-western quarter of the island of Motya with Area C: the Kothon, the nearby Temple and the South Gate.



Fig. 3: General view of the Temple of the Kothon, from north: in the central foreground, the western wing facing the Kothon with the cult installations and, to the right, the drain connecting the sacred well and the obelisk with the Kothon.



Fig. 4: General view of the Temple of the Kothon, from east; in the foreground, the eastern wing where a stele and an obelisk stood.

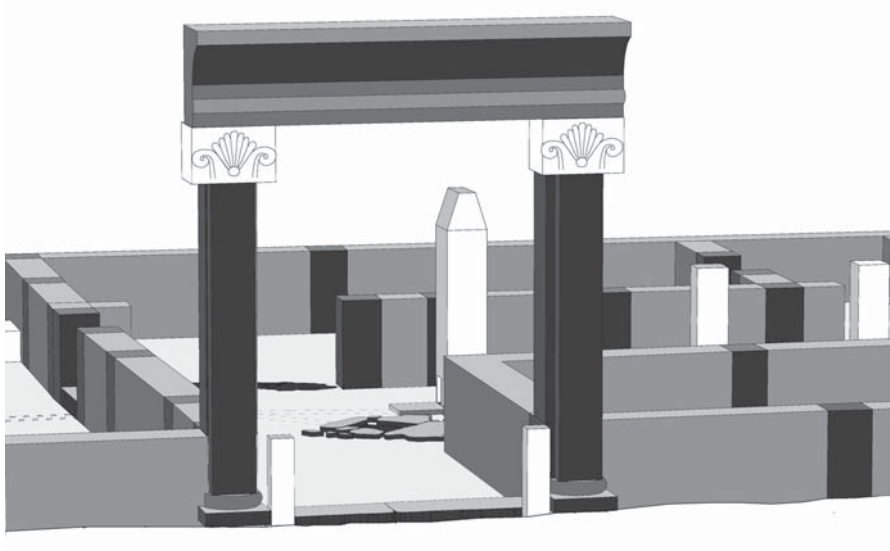


Fig. 5: Reconstruction of the main southern entrance of the Temple of the Kothon, flanked by two pilasters supporting two Proto-Aeolic capitals.



Fig. 6: Specimens of Punic stelae with carved ediculae from Motya (after Moscati – Uberti 1981, Pl. XCIII).



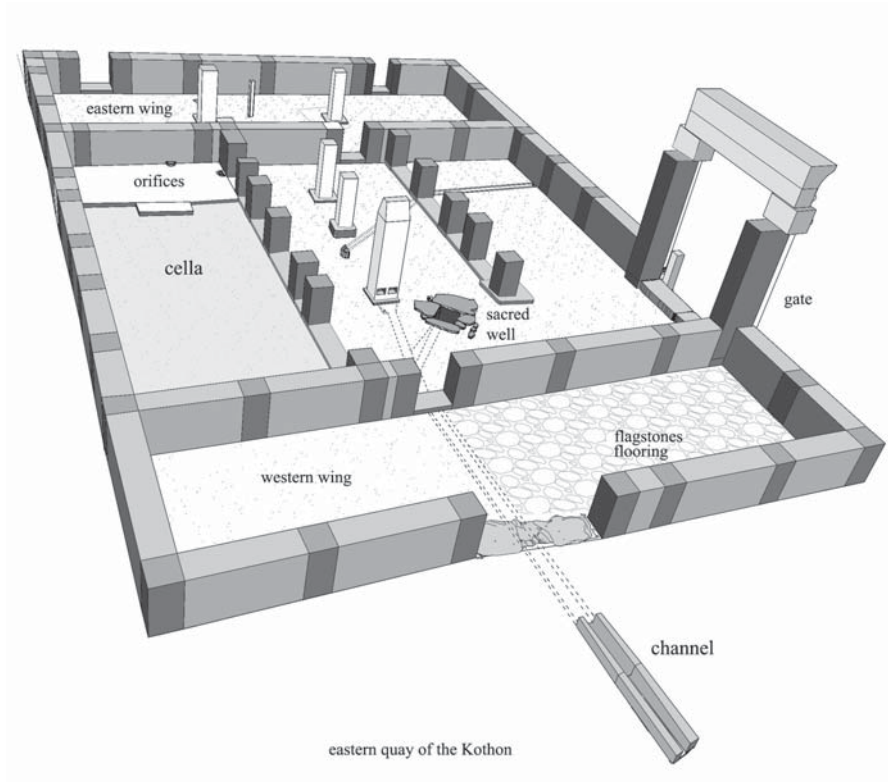


Fig. 7: Reconstruction of Temple C1 (Phase 5, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC), from north-west.



Fig. 8: Cult installations aligned on the middle axis of the central courtyard of the Temple of the Kothon, from east: the two stelae and the obelisk, each one standing on a square basis.



Fig. 9: The channel emerging on the eastern quay of the Kothon and coming from the betyl/obelisk and the sacred well in the central courtyard of the Temple.

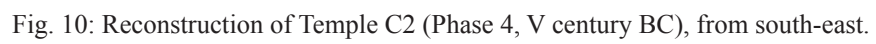




Fig. 11: General view of the southern sector of the Temple of the Kothon, from east; on the left foreground, the southern cella with the channel connected with the platform in the central courtyard and the small sandstone block pierced for libations (*mundus*) embedded into the floor.





Fig. 12: The northern side of the western wing of the Temple of the Kothon with the cult installations and two jug bottoms embedded into the floor to be used for libations.

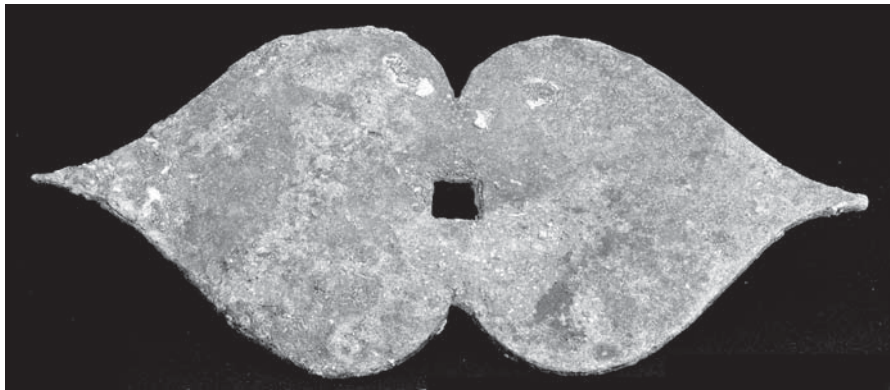


Fig. 13: Bronze element found embedded in the flooring of the eastern wing of the Temple of the Kothon.



Fig. 14: Aerial view of Area C with the Kothon, the Temple and the circular temenos wall excavated in year 2007.



Fig. 15: The *favissa* collecting the obelisk, the stelae and other blocks from the Temple of Kothon.



Fig. 16: The southern wall of the basin of the Kothon, from north, with the lower courses which clearly appear part of the original unique ashlar structure enclosing completely the pool from all its sides.

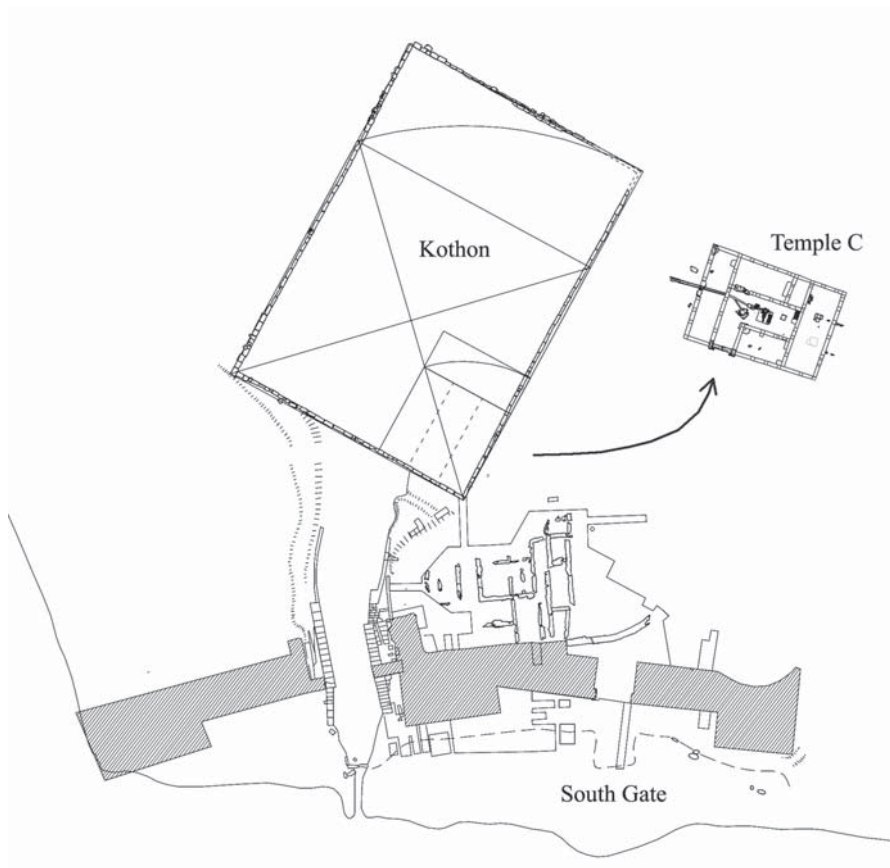


Fig. 17: Planning scheme used to build the Kothon and the nearby Temple.





Fig. 18: Aerial view of the Kothon after the emptying from seawater in year 2005 with the fresh water sprung out from the source on the northern side of the basin.



Fig. 19: Protruding blocks on the northern wall of the Kothon, through which fresh water flowed into the pool.





Fig. 20: Byblos: general view of the Obelisk Temple, from north-east.

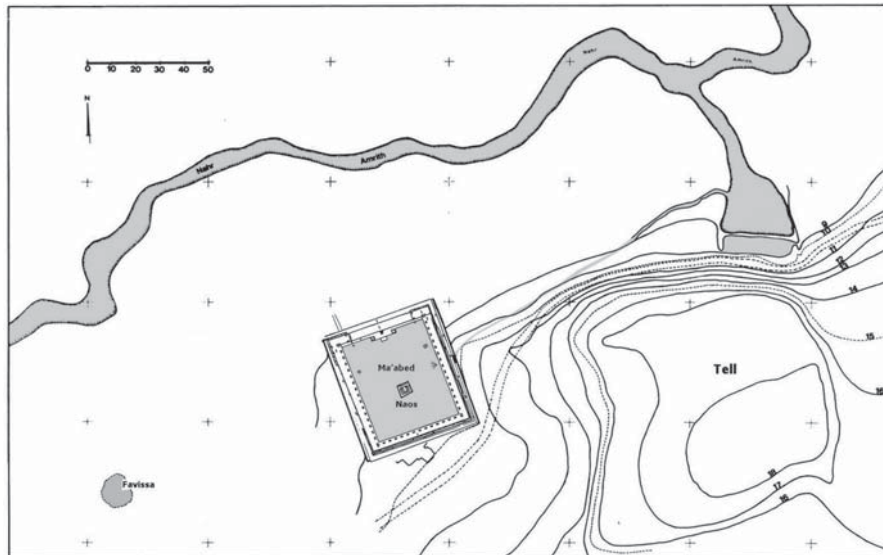


Fig. 21: Plan of the tell of Amrit, ancient Marathos, in Syria, with the so-called Ma'abed (after Dunand/Saliby 1985, 4, Fig. 2).

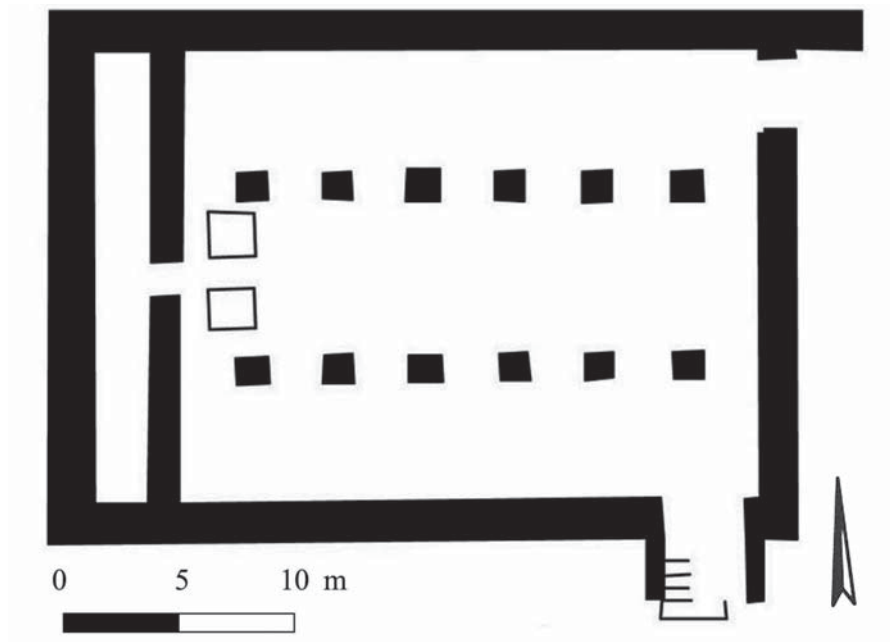


Fig. 22: Plan of Temple 1 at Kition.

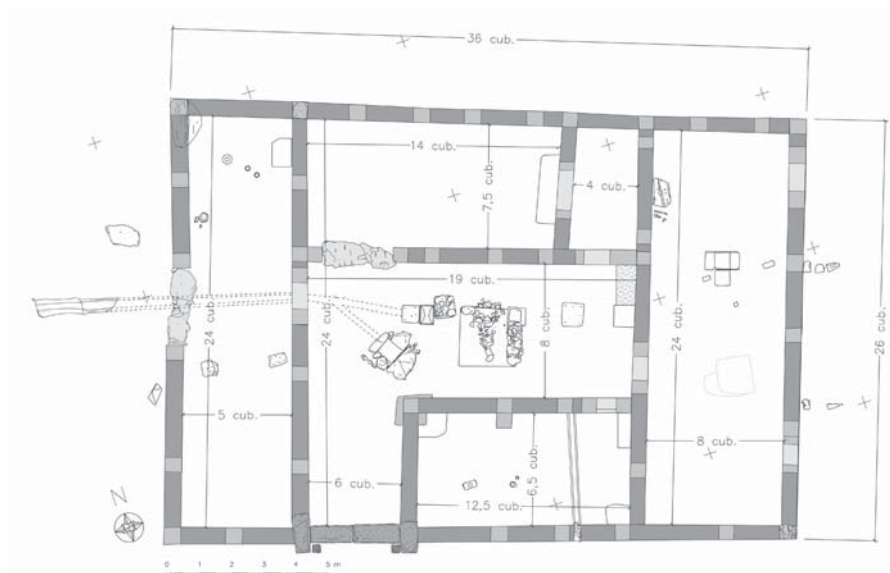


Fig. 23: Schematic plan of the Temple of the Kothon in Phase 4 (Temple C2; 5<sup>th</sup> century BC).

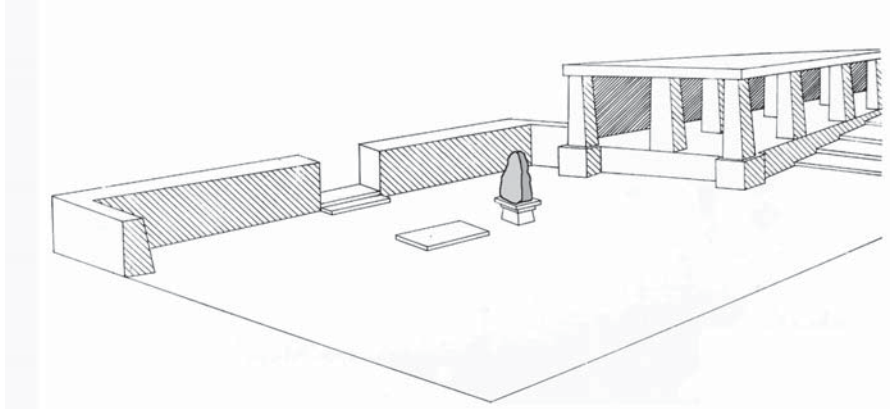


Fig. 24: Axonometric reconstruction of the Temple of Aphrodite at Kouklia Palaepaphos.



Fig. 25: One of the pillars of Temple of Aphrodite at Kouklia Palaepaphos.



Fig. 26: Conic volcanic stone interpreted as the cultic betyl in the Temple of Aphrodite at Palaepaphos.

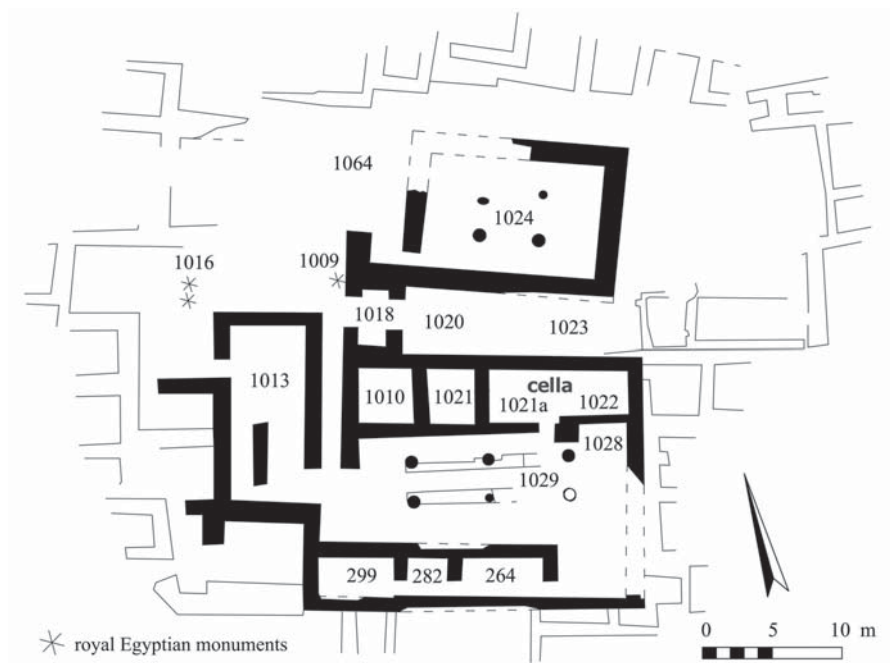


Fig. 27: Schematic plan of the temple quarter at Beth Shan, with the so-called Southern Temple and Northern Temple (Upper Stratum VI; XI century BC).

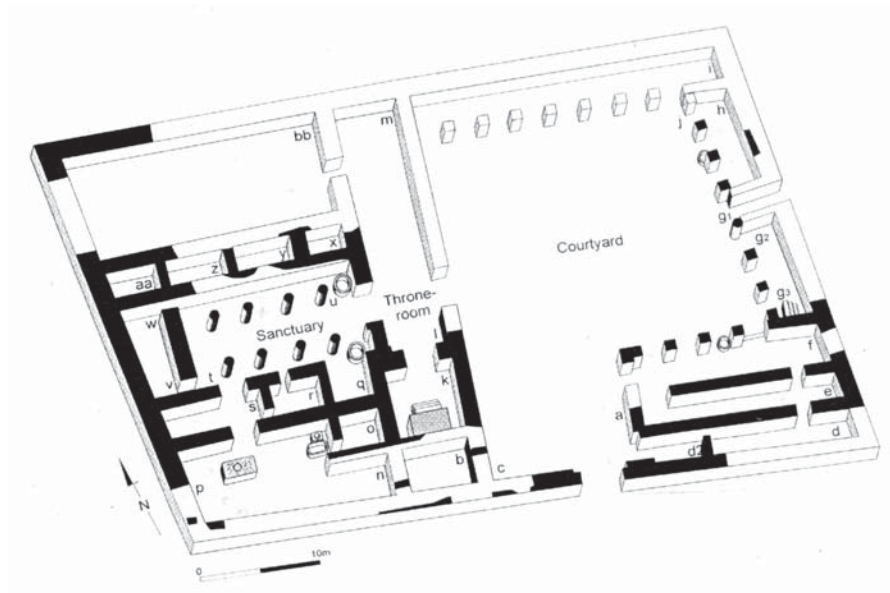


Fig. 28: Temple 650 at Khirbet el-Muqanna, ancient Ekron (after Gitin 2004, Fig. 5.6).