

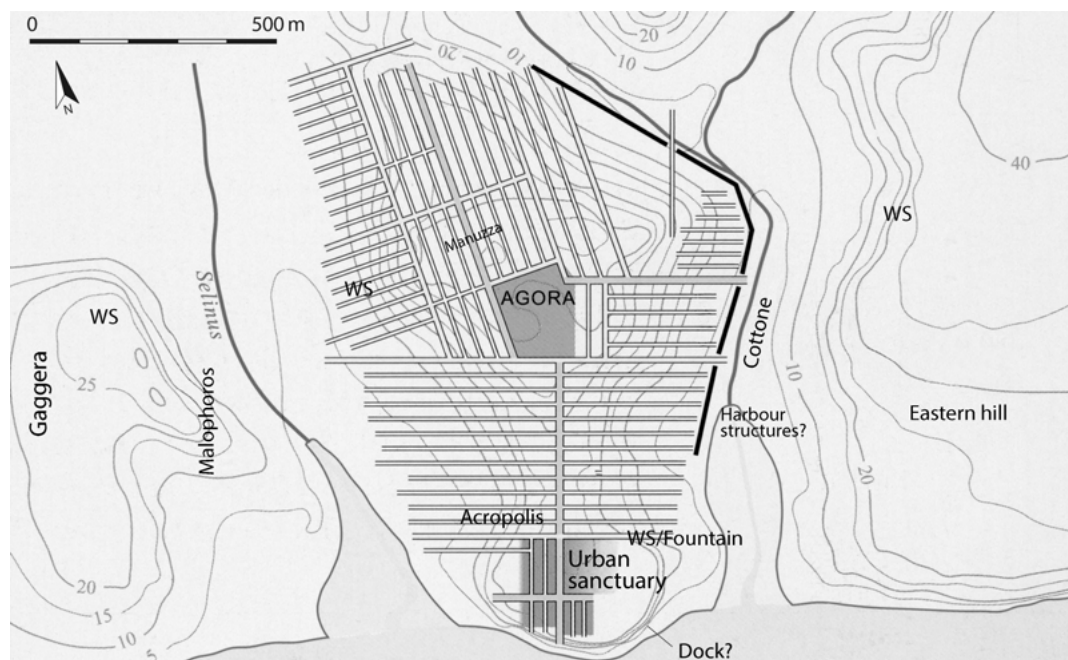
## 4 Water, Social Space and Architecture at Selinous: the Case of the Urban Sanctuary

**Abstract:** The urban sanctuary of Selinous rose on the Acropolis plateau, over an area rich in fresh water and close to the marshy lagoon of the river Cottone's estuary. Even if no cult of water and water deities is archaeologically known, the waterscape influenced both the life of the settlement and the sanctuary in several ways. This paper analyses the architectural and spatial development of Selinous' urban sanctuary, linking the data about its water installations with knowledge on the use of water in Greek rituals and public spaces. The aim is to introduce hypotheses contributing to better understanding the role played by water in Selinous' urban sanctuary.

Moreover, the paper takes into account the iconographies of coinage and literary sources from Selinous to compare them with the data about the settlement's waterscape. Water installations within the sanctuary of Selinous had no aesthetic value and did not architecturally define religious and social space. Nevertheless, lustral water, with its proper agency, might have acted in social space and during ritual activities important to create a shared sense of community.

### Introduction

The Greek colony of Selinous was founded by Megara Hyblaea in the last quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. It was located between two rivers on the southwest coast of Sicily. In antiquity, its land- and waterscape were rather different from what we see today (Fig. 1). The settlement consisted of the Acropolis plateau, the Manuzza hill behind it, the western area – nowadays known as Gaggera – and the eastern hill. The central ridge was separated from the outer areas by the river Modione (the ancient Selinus) to the west, and the river Cottone to the east – both with large and irregular estuaries. Thus, the Acropolis plateau looked like a peninsula between two narrow lagoons connected to the sea. Especially Cottone bay, to the east of the Acropolis, was a lagoon-



**Fig. 1:** Plan of Selinous with hypothetical reconstruction of the rivers' mouths. WS: approximate locations of water springs.

like environment with calm and brackish water particularly suitable for a harbour.<sup>1</sup> The urban sanctuary rose on the southeast edge of the Acropolis and overlooked the Cottone lagoon.

The rivers evidently affected Selinous' landscape and urbanscape in several ways. They influenced the settlement structure dividing the central ridge from the outer hills and made the land fertile. Their estuaries provided bays suitable for harbours and an environment rich in biodiversity. But on the other hand, they were marshy and malarious areas. These positive and negative effects of water affected Selinous throughout the entire course of its history, until the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

## Geology and water sources

From a geological point of view, the settlement area is composed of sandy clay layers and calcareous rocks. The thickness of the latter is variable, from only a few meters deep on the Acropolis to 15 meters deep on the Manuzza and eastern hills. The overlapping of permeable and water-proof layers has a strong potential for the formation of aquifers and springs.<sup>3</sup>

The first were tapped by circular wells located in many Archaic and Classical houses.<sup>4</sup> With regard to the water springs, it is not easy to identify those available in antiquity. On the basis of archaeological data and historical maps of Selinous,<sup>5</sup> it seems that the settlement was provided with four springs:<sup>6</sup> one at the Gaggera, one at the base of the west slope of the Manuzza hill,<sup>7</sup> one on the east slope<sup>8</sup> of the acropolis and one on the northwest slope of the eastern hill (Fig. 1). These springs might have fed a water supply system attested by short sections of terracotta water-pipes. Nevertheless, the scanty data available do not permit full knowledge of the features, extension and chronology of this system.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, it seems that the water supply at Selinous during the Archaic and Classical periods depended mainly on the initiative of individuals.<sup>10</sup> Most of the inhabitants relied on wells in their houses for most of their needs and resorted to springs and fountains when they needed fresh running water. Only two springs were located within the city walls, while the two others were outside the city and beyond the rivers. This made it difficult to reach running water sources

<sup>1</sup> Rabbel et al. 2014, 146. Structures and blocks located at the foot of the Acropolis' southeast slope are usually considered to be harbour docks (Fig. 1). Nevertheless, recent geophysical investigation indicates that harbour structures might have been located also at the northern edge of Cottone bay (Albers 2019, 124 f., with previous references).

<sup>2</sup> On the rivers' estuaries and marshy landscape see: Marconi 1994, 301; Greco – Tardo 2012, 193–196 figs. 1. 2; Rabbel et al. 2014; Bouffier 2015, 236. 238 figs. 2. 5; Greco – Tardo 2015, 108 f.; Mazza 2016, 179. 183 f. About the harbours: Tusa 2010, 219–226; Hermanns 2014; Albers 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the geology of Selinous see: Crouch 2003, 70–74; Furcas 2019, 77.

<sup>4</sup> Furcas 2019, 81–83. Bouffier 2009, 71.

<sup>5</sup> The richest in details is that published in Cavallari 1872, pl. 1. The plan shows, among the architectural remains, the position of water springs ('fontana') and wells ('pozzo'). The same plan is published in Mertens 2003, fig. 6.

<sup>6</sup> The relation between Selinous and the so called 'vasca selinuntina' (about 15 km to the northeast of Selinous) is still debated. Some scholars argued that this basin and the related section of water-pipe provided Selinous with fresh water from several springs (Fourmont 2012, with previous references). However, the dating of the 'vasca selinuntina' is still debated and there is no evidence of an aqueduct running from the basin to Selinous (Mertens 2006, 331; Furcas 2019, 79 f.).

<sup>7</sup> Crouch 2004, 81 fig. 3, 18 and Furcas 2019, fig. 3 indicate also a spring in the middle of the eastern slope of the Manuzza hill, but the source of this information is not clear. The plan published by J. Schubring (republished in Mertens 2003, fig. 7) indicates the presence of a water spring ('Quelle'), but according to Cavallari 1872, pl. 1 only a well was located there.

<sup>8</sup> The existence of this water spring is inferred by the presence of the fountain (see below).

<sup>9</sup> Furcas 2009, 80 f.

<sup>10</sup> Bouffier 2009, 71. 74.

from many areas of the city. Moreover, it is interesting to note that only two springs were located in main public areas (Gaggera and Acropolis), and they were related with sacred spaces in both cases.

The Gaggera spring likely played an important role in the development of the *temene* and sacred buildings located in this area. Nevertheless, it is not yet clear how the people of Selinous controlled and used its water during the Archaic and Classical periods. Moreover, the existence of a monumental fountain is still debated.<sup>11</sup>

The spring on the west slope of the Manuzza hill was quite far from the agora and no public fountain has been retrieved there so far.<sup>12</sup> The same holds true for the spring on the eastern hill: no evidence hints that its water was used for the temples located to the south of it.

The second case of a relation between water spring and public spaces concerns the urban sanctuary that rose up in the southeast area of the acropolis<sup>13</sup> upon an area rich in water, where also a public fountain was built later.

## The urban sanctuary from the beginning to the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC

This area was dedicated to cult activities from the foundation of the colony.<sup>14</sup> After a period of open air cult activities and buildings made of perishable materials, the first temples made in stone (Temples R and S, and maybe the forerunner of Temple C) were built in the southeast area of the acropolis during the first decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. At the same time, the sanctuary was extended eastward by the construction of two consecutive terraces<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 2).

A detailed reconstruction of the sanctuary is not possible at this stage, but its shape was likely influenced by the landscape, despite the construction of the terraces. If the reconstruction of the northeast side is correct, the *temenos* followed the edge of the plateau. In light of the fountain built later, we can postulate the presence of a water spring on the slope of the rocky plateau, under the northeast side of the sanctuary.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the drain channel along the south wall of the lower terrace is another clue testifying to the presence of water along the east edge of the acropolis plateau (Fig. 3). The channel, carved into the blocks at the base of the wall, came out from the inside of the lower terrace and ended at its southeast corner, over the guard stone located at the crossing between the east-west road and a north-south road.<sup>17</sup> The construction of the two terraces upon an area rich in underground water is the outcome of building activity of the first generations of Selinous inhabitants, who gradually turned landscape to urbane. Further evidence of this process can be recognized a little further north –

<sup>11</sup> The channel coming from the spring and passing through the *temene* has been related to the latest phases of Selinus (Late antiquity) by C. Greco and V. Tardo. The same authors considered the so-called Temple M a monumental fountain. Regarding the different interpretations of these structures see: Greco – Tardo 2012, 198–202; Greco – Tardo 2015, 110–113.

<sup>12</sup> No public fountain in the agora is known at present. Dieter Mertens mentioned semi-public fountains embedded within the agora's Archaic façade. These could be used both from the internal shops and the external square. Mertens did not provide further details on the installations and their exact location (Mertens 2006, 214).

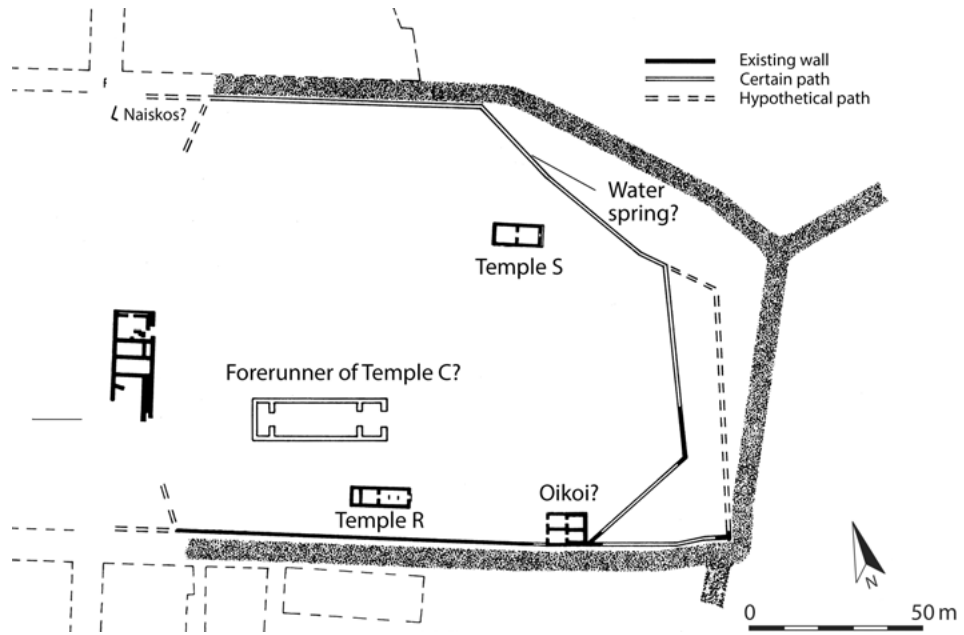
<sup>13</sup> Crouch 1993, 284 fig. 20, 5 interprets as a small fountain the niche in the house facade at the north corner between streets Sd-E and SA on the Acropolis. M. Fourmont follows this reconstruction but specifies that it is not clear if the fountain was fed by a cistern or a water line (Fourmont 2019, fig. 5). Nevertheless, there is no evidence concerning the water delivery system and basin. Moreover, the niche is less deep than the reconstruction made by D. P. Crouch. Finally, the entire wall seems to have been rearranged, probably during the Punic-Hellenistic phase.

<sup>14</sup> Marconi 2018, 180.

<sup>15</sup> Di Vita 1984, 11–23. On the first stage of Temple R: Marconi 2018, 180 fig. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Di Vita 1984, 39; Mertens 2003, 91; Mertens 2006, 187; Bouffier 2009, 71; Furcas 2019, 79.

<sup>17</sup> Di Vita 1984, 21–23 figs. 2. 3. 11–13.



**Fig. 2:** Selinous, the urban sanctuary during the first half of the 6th century BC.



**Fig. 3:** Selinous, urban sanctuary, the drain channel along the south wall of the *temenos*.

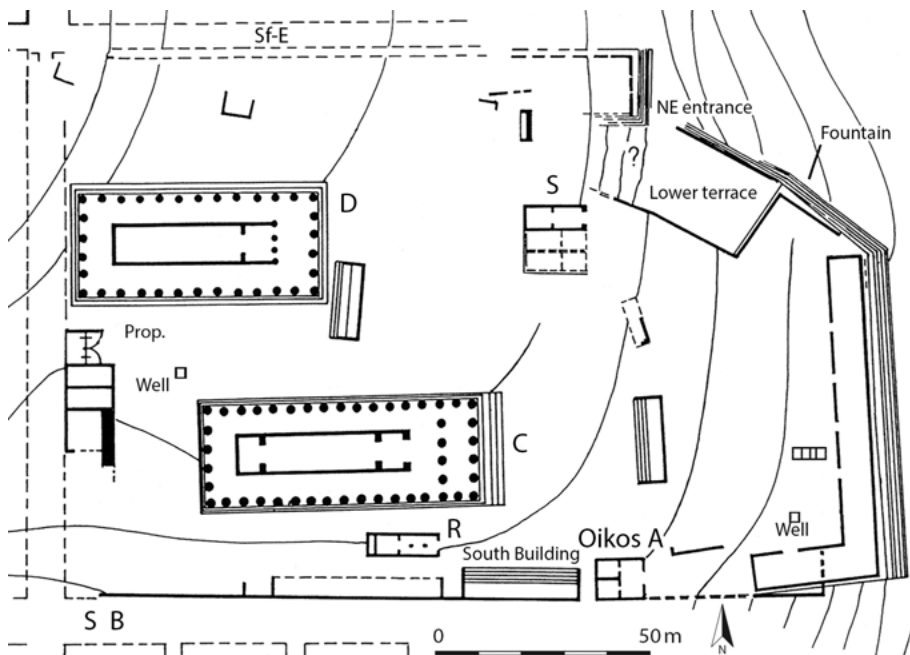
here an artificial fill was created at about the same time next to the east edge of the Cottone lagoon, before the urban development and the construction of city walls.<sup>18</sup>

Abundance of water (at the foot of the plateau, close to the sea and the river's mouth) must have influenced the first settlers looking for an appropriate place to establish the main urban sanctuary.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, a water spring was considered divine evidence and water was used in sanctuaries for the performing of several practices, regardless of the kind of deity worshipped.<sup>20</sup> Especially underground water was considered to be suitable for ritual activities, because it was particularly pure.<sup>21</sup>

## The monumentalisation process during the second half of 6<sup>th</sup> century BC

Around 560 BC, the urban sanctuary underwent a monumentalisation process that lasted probably until the last years of the century<sup>22</sup> (Fig. 4). The *temenos* was extended to the east, thanks to the construction of a huge artificial terrace made of earth and retained by a step-wall.

A lower terrace was created at the base of the northeast side of the sanctuary but, due to later building activities, it is not possible to know its shape in the north corner. We don't even know if the lower terrace was provided with buildings during this phase. Nevertheless, it is



**Fig. 4:** Selinous, the urban sanctuary during the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

<sup>18</sup> Seismic surveys have detected here a hard artificial layer located over the silted edge of the lagoon and under the urban development with buildings and city walls (Rabbel et al. 2014, 145). This artificial layer has not been dated, but the city walls over it date back to the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, yielding a *terminus ante quem*.

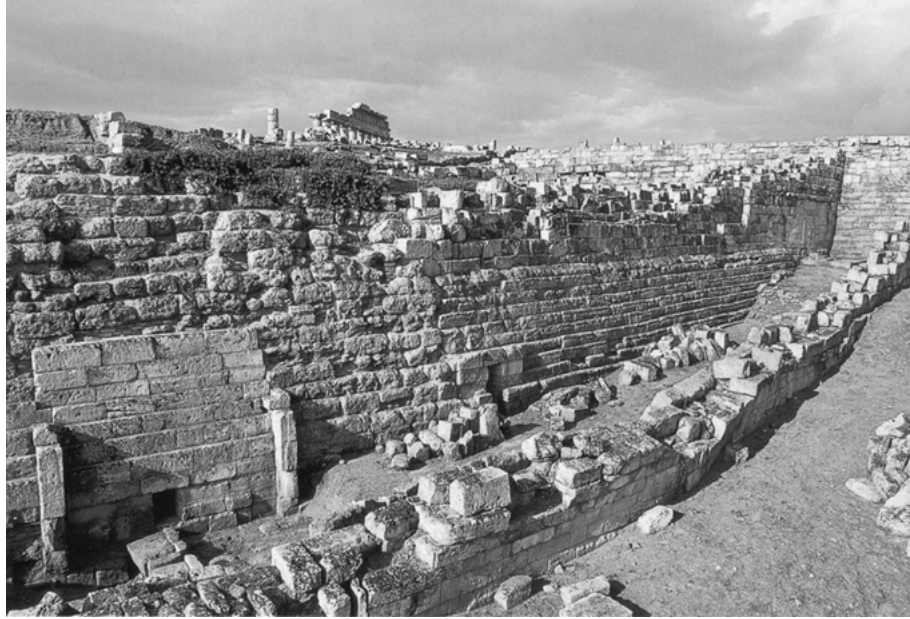
<sup>19</sup> Visibility and easy access to the plateau also played a role in choosing this area (Di Vita 1984, 12).

<sup>20</sup> Ginouvès 1962, 283–318; Tomlinson 1988, 170.

<sup>21</sup> Rudhardt 1971, 97–100.

<sup>22</sup> This was part of building activities involving streets and other areas of the settlement, too (Marconi 2007, 72–74; Chiarenza 2020).

**Fig. 5:** Selinous, urban sanctuary, the northeast retaining wall of the terrace with the fountain, looking west. The wall running parallel to the terrace dates back to the Late Classical period.



possible to reconstruct an entrance between the north corner of the sanctuary and the lower terrace.<sup>23</sup>

The north corner of the sanctuary covered the spring, but a channel canalized its water to feed the fountain built inside the retaining step-wall, to the east of the lower terrace. The channel ran at the bottom of a gallery inside the wall and reached a small internal rectangular basin. This was provided with a rectangular opening framed by two protruding pillars made of vertical ashlar<sup>24</sup> (Fig. 5). The outside structure of the fountain still needs an accurate study, but it was likely provided with a rectangular basin. A light canopy or an awning, covering the external basin, was fixed to two small rectangular holes above. The fountain has interestingly close parallels in the Cantera fountain at Megara Hyblaea, according to the suggestion of Henry Tréziny.<sup>25</sup>

We cannot reconstruct the sensory effects of the fountain without a detailed reconstruction of its outside structure and water flow.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that the fountain had no particular visual effect as it was a square opening – likely provided with a frontal basin – embedded in the massive retaining wall of the terrace.<sup>27</sup>

Further considerations refer to the functional and social levels. The fountain location suggests that people entering the sanctuary from the northeast side used the water from the

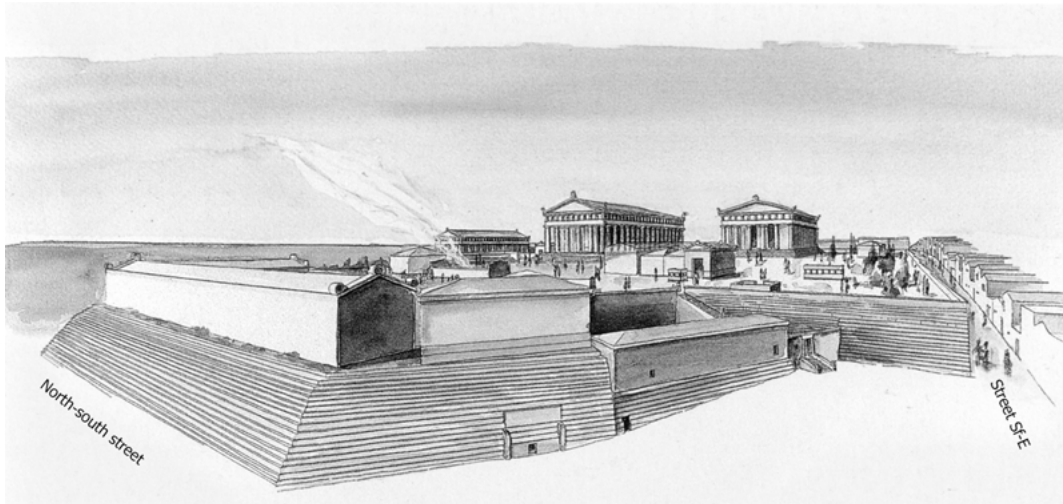
<sup>23</sup> The entrance is attested by the corner of a structure made of ashlar, under the wall of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC which is oriented north-west/south-east ('Mauerzug A'). For the corner, see Mertens 2003, 92 fig. 101 Beil. 4. R. Martin argued that this was the main entrance during the Archaic and Classical periods (Martin 1980/1981, 1014). The limited extension of the excavation does not allow us to state whether a ramp or a staircase linked the entrance to the upper terrace. According to A. Di Vita, the corner structure was the base of a monument located outside the *temenos* (Di Vita 1984, 39 fig. 18).

<sup>24</sup> Mertens 2003, 89–92 figs. 91–98 Beil. 4. The current arrangement is the outcome of later modifications. A new feeding channel coming from the southwest was built later, but its date is unknown. Even though this indicates that the first spring had dried up, it is evident that the new channel tapped the same aquifer located under the artificial filling of the terrace.

<sup>25</sup> Tréziny 2004, 278–287 figs. 307–312; Bouffier 2009, 71 f.

<sup>26</sup> About the aesthetics of water display, see Glaser 2000a; 2000b. About the pleasure of water in Roman culture: Rogers 2018, 83–85.

<sup>27</sup> The perspective vision in fig. 6 gives an idea of the fountain visual effects, even if it does not reconstruct any basin and does not take into account the original level of the street, that was lower than today.



**Fig. 6:** Selinous, reconstruction of the urban sanctuary during the 5th century BC, looking northwest.

spring.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the fountain looked out onto an open space accessible from several directions: the streets Sf-E and SB and the north-south street running next to the retaining wall (Fig. 6). Also, a street parallel to the city wall and coming from northeast likely reached the open space in front of the fountain.<sup>29</sup> If we consider that the fountain was probably the only one in the acropolis area and one of the few public water sources in the whole settlement, it is evident that its water was tapped by the majority of inhabitants when they needed fresh water, instead of that drawn from the wells in the houses.<sup>30</sup> This raises the question about who exactly attended this place. According to iconographic and written sources, drawing water from fountains in Greek cities seems to have been an action performed mainly by women. Their social status is a matter of debate and there might have been differences according to time and cultural areas.<sup>31</sup> However, it is important to stress that, regardless of their status, women (and men?) came together and chatted in front of public fountains. Thus, this routinized household activity performed in the public space in front of fountains turned out to be a social practice.<sup>32</sup> This might hold true also for Selinous' fountain. Indeed, even though it was related to the sanctuary, the fountain overlooked an outside square accessible from several directions. Moreover, the fountain location – close to the harbour – likely made it a water source also available for seafarers looking for fresh water during their stops at Selinous.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the fountain and the area in front of it might have been not only a space of social interaction for the inhabitants, but also a space of encounter between locals and foreign people.

<sup>28</sup> According to Mertens 2006, 214 and Furcas 2019, 79, there was a functional relation between the fountain and entrance to the sanctuary.

<sup>29</sup> R. Martin argued that a street for religious parades ran here and was related with the northeast entrance to the sanctuary (Martin 1980/1981, 14).

<sup>30</sup> On the wells of Selinous, see Furcas 2019, 81–83.

<sup>31</sup> Extensive literature exists on the subject and is mainly based on Athenian figured pottery. An extended and useful contribution on the topic is Kosso – Lawton 2009 (with previous references). Iozzo 2003, 20–22 suggests that the depictions of women at the fountain on Athenian figured vases had different meanings according to different contexts and periods.

<sup>32</sup> On social practices as routinized activities, see: Reckwitz 2002. About social practices as spatial phenomena, see Schatzki 2015, 1–3.

<sup>33</sup> Bouffier 2009, 71 argues that, because of its off-centre location, the fountain was used by people arriving at Selinous from outside or coming from the harbour. We would like to know if inhabitants of Selinous and foreigners could freely access the fountain and if it was managed by the sanctuary or other authorities. Regarding the legal and economic aspects of water resources in Greek sanctuaries, see: Panessa 1983; Alberico 2017. See also Kobusch, this volume.

## Social space: the area to the east of Temple C

During the Archaic period another entrance led to the east part of the sanctuary from the south side. It was located next to the Archaic *oikoi*<sup>34</sup> and led directly to the space between Temple C and its altar, both built around the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>35</sup> and likely consecrated to Apollo Paian, according to a later inscription.<sup>36</sup>

It is not by accident that the main temple of Selinous – located in the urban sanctuary over an area rich in underground water and next to a malarial and marshy lagoon – was consecrated to Apollo the healer, a god who was the sender and curer of disease.<sup>37</sup>

In front of the sacrificial area, a long two-winged hall<sup>38</sup> rose up on the east edge of the terrace together with the construction of the retaining wall.<sup>39</sup> The east wing was provided with three or four entrances<sup>40</sup> giving access to the hall which was paved with terracotta tiles. In front of the corner between the two wings, a circular well drew water from the aquifer under the artificial filling of the terrace.<sup>41</sup> The tiled floor suggests that the hall was likely a banquet building where communal meals after the sacrifices and during religious ceremonies took place.<sup>42</sup> The location of the well in front of the Archaic hall strengthens this hypothesis. Water sources were indeed inevitabilities for halls, *stoai* and other kinds of buildings or spaces where ritual feasting took place. Water was necessary for the cleansing of worshippers before the meal, as well as cooking, diluting the wine and washing the floor after the meal.<sup>43</sup> For the latter, a floor

<sup>34</sup> Marconi 2007, 73 (with previous references).

<sup>35</sup> Østby 1995, 87–92; Mertens 2006, 118–125; Marconi 2007, 127–184; Voigts 2017, 25–41. A second, smaller altar was built during the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century to the north of the first one (Voigts 2017, 46–48).

<sup>36</sup> Marconi 1999; Marconi 2007, 132f. See also n. 66.

<sup>37</sup> On the possible connections between healing cults of Apollo and sacred water springs, see Parker 1983, 213 (with other references). On the cathartic and healing aspects of Apollo, see Parker 1983, 331–344. 392. On the connection between the malarious landscape and the cult of Apollo Paian in Temple C: Marconi 1994, 302; Greco – Tardo 2012, 193 f.; Muccioli 2015, 264 f. The healing aspects were, of course, not the only reason for the consecration of Temple C to Apollo, who was the most prominent god also in Megara (Selinous' mother-city). Regarding the similarities of Apollo's features between Selinous and Megara, see Marconi 2007, 196–199.

<sup>38</sup> I prefer to use this definition instead of the most common *stoa*, because the portico was added later to the building. This is confirmed by two main observations: 1) the stratigraphic relation between the portico's antae and the outer wall of the north wing; 2) the position of the north anta (slightly further south than the north corner of the hall), showing that the portico was built after the L-shaped building to the north of the hall. On the later construction of the portico, see: Coulton 1976, 32. 95. 281. 283; Kuhn 1985, 262 f.; Mertens 2003, 240 n. 833.

<sup>39</sup> Di Vita 1967; Di Vita 1984, 21 (n. 17). 34; Mertens 2003, 239 f.

<sup>40</sup> A rectangular structure (ca. 7.40 × 2.15 m), east-west oriented, was next to the south entrance. It consisted of three or four squared openings and today is partially covered by the portico. The rectangular structure was therefore built together with the two-winged hall (before the portico) and might have been used for cult activities related to ceremonies performed in front of Altar C.

<sup>41</sup> This was probably the same aquifer that made it necessary to build the drain channel along the south wall of the terrace during the previous building phase.

<sup>42</sup> For this interpretation of the hall, see: Kuhn 1985, 264; Bergquist 1992, 144. Both scholars suggested this interpretation also in light of a drainage close to the south-west sector of the hall, possibly linked to the drain channel along the south wall of the terrace (see the previous note). The drainage was discovered by A. Di Vita in 1953, but was no longer visible already in 1967 (Di Vita 1967, 7 n. 10). The scholar thought that the drainage flushed out the rainwater from the hall's roof down to the channel. Later, Di Vita suggested that the channel along the south wall drained water under the terrace during the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and no longer mentioned any link with the drainage in the south-west sector of the hall (Di Vita 1984, 21–23). Therefore, the existence of a drainage from the hall south corner to the channel at the base of the terrace is questionable. Moreover, only one drainage for such an extended hall does not seem enough to flush out the supposed cleaning water, especially if we consider that the slope in the hall's floor went from west to east (the supposed drainage would have been located at the highest point and not at the lowest one).

<sup>43</sup> On the necessity of water for feasting activities, see the remarks of R. Tomlinson on the Heraion at Perachora and other Archaic and Classical sanctuaries in Greece (Tomlinson 1988, 170 f.). Other examples of water installations in *stoai* and dining rooms within Greek sanctuaries are in Guettel Cole 1988, 164 f.



with a solid covering made of marble, mortar or terracotta tiles was particularly suitable, as several examples in Greece testify.<sup>44</sup>

The extension of the *temenos* to the east is usually related to the need for an expanded sacrificial area in front of Temple C and its altar.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, a comparison between the available space in the upper terrace during the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and the later *temenos* expansion indicates that the main reason might have been different (Figs. 2, 4).

In Greek sanctuaries, the fundamental space for ritual actions was composed of two elements: the altar and the area to the west of it, where most of the ritual practices took place.<sup>46</sup> The sacrifice (*thysia*) and the subsequent communal meal had religious and social goals. The first was to reinforce the bonds between deities and the religious community, the second to regulate the social relations between actors and groups of actors, and to strengthen the bonds amongst them.<sup>47</sup> In Selinous' urban sanctuary, there was already enough space to build the monumental Temple C and its altar during the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Missing from the earlier sanctuary configuration was an appropriate space to allow larger groups of people to take part in sacrifices and perform social activities, thereby reinforcing community cohesion. This goal was achieved by the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, thanks to the hall and large space in front of it. Moreover, it is important to underline that this space – specifically intended for practices different from the sacrifice – was even larger than that to the west of it, where the sacrifice itself was performed.

On the basis of several literary and iconographic sources about Greek rituals,<sup>48</sup> water was used in the sacrificial space to wash the hands of the officiants and sprinkle the animals, the participants and the altar.<sup>49</sup> It seems, therefore, that water acted in the sacrificial space as a sort of *trait d'union* among all the actors involved in the sacrifice, turning them from an impure to a pure status.<sup>50</sup>

We might assume that this holds true also for the space in front of Temple C. Water drawn from the circular well in front of the two-winged hall, and maybe also from the fountain next to the northeast entrance, might have been used to perform these actions.<sup>51</sup>

Water likely was also used inside the two-winged hall and in front of it, during ritual and social activities important for community cohesion. Here, perhaps, the agency of water changed physically and symbolically the status (impure/pure; unclean/clean) of actors and space.

If these were the cases, water might have been one of the (non-human) agents acting in those religious and civic rituals (sacrificing and feasting) that created a shared sense of community and togetherness. This association between community and lustral water in public space seems to be confirmed also by literary sources by way of contrast: those who were impure and consequently not community members were kept away from lustral water collected in public spaces and/or used for sacred rituals.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Roux 1973, 552–554; Kuhn 1985, 240. 264.

<sup>45</sup> Di Vita 198, 34. 48; Østby 1995, 88; Mertens 2006, 187; Marconi 2007, 72.

<sup>46</sup> Sassu 2017, 197 (with other references).

<sup>47</sup> Sassu 2017, 191.

<sup>48</sup> Ginouvès 1962, 299–318; Burkert 1977, 101–108; van Straten 1995, 31–49 figs. 30–53; Gebauer 2002, 213. 246–252; ThesCRA I (2004) 65–67. 116 s. v. Sacrifices (A. Hermay – M. Leguilloux). ThesCRA II (2004) 23 f. 26 f. s. v. Purificazione, Gr. (O. Paoletti).

<sup>49</sup> In Greek sacrifice, a specific kind of vessel (*chérnips*) usually contained the lustral water intended for these ritual actions. On the instruments for ritual cleaning with water: ThesCRA V (2005) 165–183 s. v. Kultinstrumente (I. Krauskopf).

<sup>50</sup> On the cathartic power of water used in sacrifices, see: Ginouvès 1962, 316 f.; Burkert 1977, 132–134. Rudhardt 1992, 173 f. argues that the water of the pre-sacrificial rituals had a 'qualité religieuse positive' and was 'chargé de puissance'.

<sup>51</sup> On the importance of underground water for ritual activities, see n. 21.

<sup>52</sup> Ginouvès 1962, 313: in the *Eumenides* by Aeschylus (458 BC), Orestes – murderer of his mother – cannot touch the lustral water used by the *phratría* for the sacrifices. In two different orations of Aeschines ('Against Ktesiphon' and 'Against Timarchus'), people not allowed to enter the Agora were kept away from *perirrhanteria*. For other

## The western entrance and the function of *perirrhanteria*

In addition to the northeast and south entrances, the sanctuary had a third one during the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The latter was located in the middle of the west *temenos* wall and maybe provided with a gate during this phase.<sup>53</sup> A circular well was located in front of it, a couple of meters to the east. People entering the sanctuary<sup>54</sup> likely used this water for purification rituals.<sup>55</sup>

Two of the three entrances to the sanctuary, therefore, were provided with water installations likely used by worshippers approaching the sacred space: the fountain next to the northeast entrance, and the circular well in front of the west entrance. Another circular well was located not far from the south entrance and provided the space to the east of Temple C with necessary water. Due to the lack of information from the excavations, we can only postulate the existence of *perirrhanteria* and other kinds of basins located close to entrances, wells and altars in order to facilitate ritual activity performed with water. *Perirrhanteria* from Selinous were usu-



**Fig. 7:** Palermo, Museo Archeologico Antonino Salinas, human-shaped stand of a *perirrhanterion* from Selinous' urban sanctuary.

examples of these prohibitions, see also ThesCRA II (2004), 26 f. s. v. Purificazione, Gr. (O. Paoletti). On the relations of the *thysia* with notions of community and purity, see also Rudhardt 1992, 257–266.

<sup>53</sup> Mertens 2003, 84, figs. 77–80.81; Mertens 2006, 101 f. figs. 145–147. According to Marconi 2007, 74, there is no evidence that the gate belongs to this phase.

<sup>54</sup> The well is partially covered by a later north-west/south-east wall built after 409 BC. For both well and wall, see: Gabrici 1929, pls. 1. 3; Helas 2011, Faltbeil. 1. 4. 6. The circular opening in Mertens 2003 fig. 81 and Mertens 2006, fig. 146 likely belongs to a Punic-Hellenistic cistern (Helas 2011, 235 fig. IX 49 Beil. 24).

<sup>55</sup> On the purification rituals required before entering Greek sanctuaries, see Kobusch, this volume.

ally made of terracotta and showed cylinder-stamped decoration along the rim,<sup>56</sup> but the most beautiful examples were made of marble. One of them has a human-shaped stand (Fig. 7) and is comparable with Archaic *perirhanteria* from the major Greek sanctuaries.<sup>57</sup>

The location of water sources close to the entrances of the Selinous' sanctuary, therefore, had mainly a practical purpose, but might have been related also to the idea that basins with lustral water represented symbolic borders in *temene* and public spaces, to such an extent that the term *perirhanterion* was used sometimes instead of the word *temenos*.<sup>58</sup>

## The sanctuary during the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC

Between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, the east sector of the *temenos* changed again (Fig. 8). The previous northeast entrance was covered by earth and also by the northwest/southeast wall running from the lower terrace to the northeast corner of the sanctuary.<sup>59</sup> In the lower terrace, a tapered door with a few low steps was installed.<sup>60</sup> It led to the upper terrace, through a flight of stairs next to the retaining wall. Unlike the entrances from the west and south sides, the sequence of low steps in front of the door, the lower terrace, and the long stair introduced the visitor into the *temenos* via a progressive and slow ascent that prepared him or her to enter into the sacred space, possibly creating a sense of expectation.

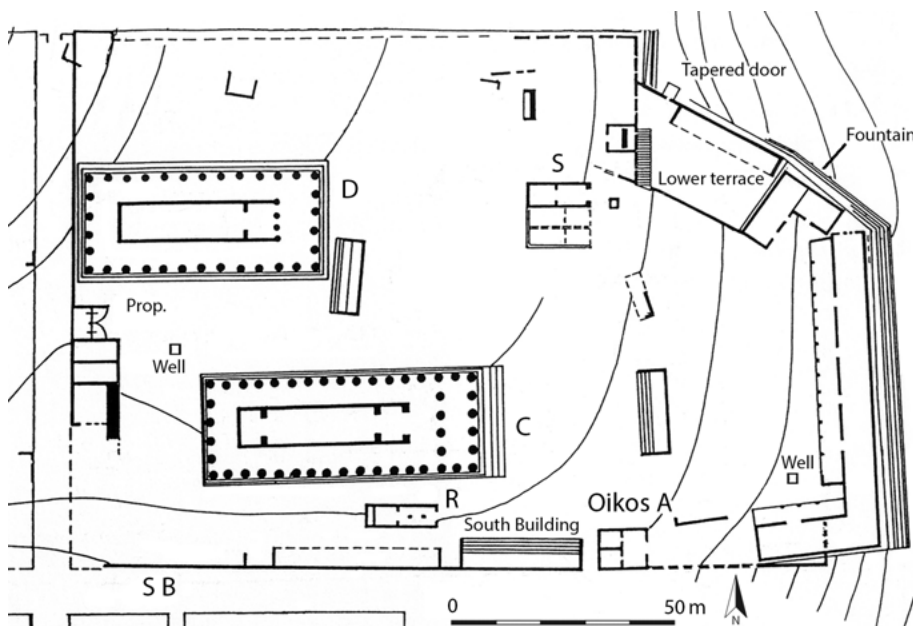


Fig. 8: Selinous, the urban sanctuary during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

<sup>56</sup> Terracotta *perirhanteria* have been retrieved during excavations in the sanctuary, but their original location cannot be retraced, because they have been found in secondary positions or because of information lacking in old archaeological reports (see for example Gabrici 1929, 93). Selinous is considered to have been one of the major production centres in Sicily of this kind of object. About them see: Allegro 1982; Farinholt Ward 2018. On the location of *perirhanteria* and ritual of *perirhansis* in Greek sanctuaries see Kobusch, this volume.

<sup>57</sup> The *perirhanterion* was retrieved in 1935 to the north of Temple D among debris from previous excavations, but its original location is unknown (Tusa 1983 129 n. 28, with previous references). For similar marble *perirrhantaria* from Olympia and Samos, see Pimpl 1997, 164–166. 169 f. fig. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Burkert 1977, 146; ThesCRA II (2004) 26 f. s. v. Purificazione, Gr. (O. Paoletti). See also the literature quoted in n. 52.

<sup>59</sup> Mertens 2003, Beil. 4.

<sup>60</sup> On the problems related to some elements of the lower terrace, see Mertens 2003, 92–97.

After taking in the view of the bay with the harbour to the east, the visitor entered the upper terrace and admired the sacred buildings.

During this building phase, the south entrance of the sanctuary was partially changed, too. The so-called south building – a stepped structure which was likely used as a theatre – was built to the west of the entrance, against the south wall of the *temenos*.<sup>61</sup> It allowed worshippers to attend sacrifices and other ritual performances (e.g. processions and sacred dances). The south building to the left and the Archaic *oikoi* to the right framed this entryway. The visitor got only a partial glimpse of the sanctuary from the entrance and only at the end of the entryway was there a complete view of Temple C and its altar.

Two other constructions can probably be dated between the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC: the two-roomed building to the north of the hall<sup>62</sup> and – slightly later – the portico attached to the latter.<sup>63</sup> We have no information about the two-roomed building and can only speculate that it was somehow involved in the religious activity within the sanctuary.

The portico attached to the two-winged hall might have been built as a consequence of an increase in the number of people taking part in sacrifices and feasts. It provided a covered space to the worshippers attending the ritual activities or visiting the sanctuary.

The two new constructions (the two-roomed building and the portico) affected both the perception of the (social) space and the ritual practices performed in it. The new building to the north of the hall enclosed definitively the space to the east of Altar C and interrupted the last possible visual connection between this sector of the *temenos* and the eastern hill with its temples. The building therefore contributed to defining the social space of ritual practices and probably reinforced the sense of community and togetherness perceived by the worshippers taking part in sacrifices and feasts.

The building activities of this phase also consistently affected the ritual practices in the sanctuary. The sequence of tapered door, lower terrace, and long stair made it impossible for processions with animals to enter the *temenos* from this side.<sup>64</sup> Ritual practices to the east of Altar C probably changed too, because the portico covered the structure with squared openings next to the south entrance of the two-winged hall.<sup>65</sup>

Another important change occurred in the sanctuary (possibly in the east sector) during this phase. It was the construction or reconstruction of a monumental altar consecrated to Apollo Paian and Athena, as an inscription dated to the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC indicates.<sup>66</sup> Even if we do not know the reasons for the changes that occurred during the first decades of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, it is interesting to consider some more or less contemporaneous events and iconographies related to rivers and water at Selinous.

<sup>61</sup> Clemente Marconi dates this structure to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (Marconi 2018, 181 fig. 7). Clemens Voigts argues for a slightly later date (Voigts 2017, 48–57 fig. 35).

<sup>62</sup> I consider the two-roomed building to be later than the hall for two reasons: the confined space between the hall and the two-roomed building seems to indicate that the latter was built later; the south-east side of the two-roomed building covers the north corner of the hall's foundation (see Merten 2003, Beil. 4; Helas 2011, Faltbeil. 2).

<sup>63</sup> On the features indicating that the portico was attached later to the hall, see n. 38.

<sup>64</sup> Processions had to enter by the West and South entrances. The theatrical structure (South building) next to the South entrance might be related to this phenomenon (see above).

<sup>65</sup> See n. 40.

<sup>66</sup> The inscription contains a dedication to Apollo Paian and Athena. The inscribed block was retrieved between Temples C and D and belonged to a monumental altar, but its original location is unknown (Marconi 1999; Marconi

## Empedocles, the rivers and the nymph: memories of reclamation works at Selinous?

According to Diogenes Laertius, the philosopher Empedocles, who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, ended a plague caused by the stench from one of Selinous' rivers. The philosopher diverted two different rivers in order to sweeten the water of the foetid one. After his action, the inhabitants of Selinous venerated Empedocles as a god.<sup>67</sup> This story has numerous historical and historiographical problems, but describes technically feasible events fitting Selinous' waterscape and history.<sup>68</sup> It might be related to important reclamation works that later were ascribed to Empedocles, who was the most famous philosopher and 'scientist' of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>69</sup> Even if the text does not specify the name of the marshy river, this might be the Cottone, to the east of the Acropolis. Its mouth, indeed, was a very calm lagoon filled with brackish water – ideal conditions for stench and plagues. This lagoon silted up over time for natural reasons, but the harbour built at its edge might have accelerated the process.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, it is interesting to note that flood problems in the area in front of the eastern gates seem to have been solved in the Early Classical period.<sup>71</sup>

Some scholars have tried to establish a link between the story of Empedocles and the iconographies of tetradrachms and didrachms issued by Selinous, starting from the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>72</sup>

On the obverse of the tetradrachms, the personification of the river Selinous performs a libation on an altar flanked by a rooster – an animal linked with chthonic and healing gods; the statue of a (domesticated?) bull stands on a base. The reverse depicts Apollo and Artemis on a cart. The goddess drives the vehicle, while her brother shoots an arrow (Fig. 9a)

The didrachms show on the obverse the personification of river Hypsas<sup>73</sup> performing a libation on an altar, while a snake – again an animal linked with chthonic and healing gods – coils on the structure; behind the river, a heron or a crane – typical birds of lagoons and marshy areas – leaves the scene. On the reverse Heracles tames a bull<sup>74</sup> (Fig. 9b).

Even if personifications of rivers are common among issues from other cities of Sicily and Magna Graecia,<sup>75</sup> and in the case of Selinous their direct link with the Empedocles story is unlikely, the numerous water- and marsh-related elements in these coins during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC are striking.

The same holds true also for other water-related iconography depicted on Selinous' drachmae and litrae during the same decades. The drachma shows the head of the river Selinous on the obverse and, on the reverse, the head of the water nymph Eurymedousa, daughter of the river god Achelous. A water bird stands behind the nymph's head (Fig. 9c).

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2007, 132f.). The existence of Paian at Selinus is likely confirmed by the so-called Getty Hexameters, in which Paian appears four times, interestingly associated with the term *φάρμακα* (Rutherford 2013). On the Getty Hexameters see Antonetti 2018 (with extended literature).

<sup>67</sup> Diog. Laert. 8, 69–71 (quoted by Muccioli 2015, 261f.).

<sup>68</sup> Muccioli 2015, 262–264.

<sup>69</sup> Rambaldi 2010, 14.

<sup>70</sup> Rabbel et al. 2014, 146. Rambaldi 2010, 16 claims, on historical considerations, that the river mentioned by Diogenes was the modern Cottone. According to Muccioli 2015, 264, the river was the Selinous (modern Modione), because it was the eponymous river of the city. Nevertheless, this conclusion is not sufficient.

<sup>71</sup> Mertens 2003, 395f.

<sup>72</sup> For the coins: Cutroni Tusa 2010, 159–162 figs. 2–3. On the link: Muccioli 2015, 265 with previous literature.

<sup>73</sup> The Hypsas is identified with the modern river Belice (a few kilometres to the east of Selinous).

<sup>74</sup> This iconography is usually related to one of Heracles' labours, but, in this case, might refer also to the domestication of a river – often depicted as a bull.

<sup>75</sup> Rambaldi 2010, 17.

**Fig. 9:** Selinous' silver coinage during the 5th century BC; a: tetradrachm; b: didrachm; c: drachm; d: litra; pictures not to scale.



On the lytra's obverse, a female figure sits on a rock and caresses (or tames) a snake with her right hand (Fig. 9d). On the reverse, the river Selinous is depicted as a bull with a human head. It has been suggested that the sitting female figure represents Eurymedousa, depicted as the nymph of one of Selinous' water springs.<sup>76</sup> Does the nymph sitting on a rock refer to water spring of the Acropolis plateau? The hypothesis is fascinating, but cannot be confirmed at present.<sup>77</sup>

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to underline that water-related events and public works might have occurred or been undertaken, respectively, at Selinous during the 5th century BC, and maybe they influenced the coins' iconography, as well the story about Empedocles. Human action, of course, was not enough to ensure a perfect outcome of the reclamation works. Divine action – especially that of the healer-god worshipped in the urban sanctuary – was necessary as well.

The iconographies of Apollo shooting arrows,<sup>78</sup> river gods in front of altars, water nymphs and birds, as well as the Empedocles story and dedication to Apollo Paian date back to the first half of the 5th century BC and might have been interrelated.<sup>79</sup> This is not an accident, if we consider Selinous' waterscape and the building history of its urban sanctuary.

## Conclusion

The southeast area of the Acropolis plateau had been dedicated to cult activities since the foundation of the colony. The abundance of water played an important role in choosing the appropriate place to establish the main urban sanctuary, both for religious/ideological and practical reasons. During the 6th and the 5th centuries BC, the sanctuary increased in dimensions and ritual activities and underwent a quasi-uninterrupted building process with the construction of monumental structures. It is interesting to note that, against this backdrop, water had no architecturally and aesthetically relevant role for the urban sanctuary:<sup>80</sup> the fountain consisted of a basin in front of an opening embedded in the retaining wall; there was no fountain in a

<sup>76</sup> Zoppi 2009, 67–69 figs. 20–23 (with previous references).

<sup>77</sup> Zoppi 2009, 69 thinks that Eurymedousa was related to the Gaggera spring.

<sup>78</sup> Regarding the possible connections between this iconography and the altar's dedication to Apollo Paian, see Marconi 1999, 12.

<sup>79</sup> On this interrelation see the meaningful observations of Marconi 1994, 300–303.

<sup>80</sup> The same holds true for sanctuaries of the Greek mainland and Asia Minor during the Archaic and Classical periods (see Kobusch, this volume).

prominent position within the sanctuary; the wells – as usual for Archaic and Classical times – had no monumental structure.

The scanty data from the first archaeological reports do not allow a detailed reconstruction of the use of water within the sanctuary. However, this paper has introduced some hypotheses on the agency of water, examining the sanctuary's architecture and space in the light of Greek literary and iconographic sources.

Water installations had mainly a practical function for Selinous' civic and religious community. They were located close to sanctuary entrances and in spaces where important activities for community cohesion were likely performed: meeting and chatting in front of the fountain, sacrificing and feasting between Temple C and the two-winged hall.

The agency of water affected action and perception in the sacred space, starting with the first religious activities. Fresh water influenced the choice of location for the sanctuary and acted in ritual activities. Especially lustral water might have affected the status of all the ritual's participants (humans and animals) within the sanctuary, and marked symbolic and temporal borders. Marshy water also caused plagues, and likely these had consequences in reclamation works and maybe also in religious activities within the sanctuary. On the other hand, throughout Selinous' history, human agency affected landscape and waterscape in the sanctuary area. The artificial filling next to the edge of the Cottone lagoon was the precondition of the urban development and the construction of the city walls. The construction of the harbour likely accelerated the silting of the lagoon. The artificial terraces over the area rich in water at the base of the Acropolis plateau allowed for the monumentalisation of the sanctuary and covered the water spring.

The outlined framework, therefore, underlines the mutual influences among landscape, action and perception of water.

## Illustration Credits

Fig. 1: Nicola Chiarenza after Mertens 2006, fig. 302.

Fig. 2: Nicola Chiarenza after Di Vita 1984, fig. 5.

Fig. 3: After Di Vita 1984, fig. 3.

Fig. 4: Nicola Chiarenza after Mertens 2006, fig. 326.

Fig. 5: After Mertens 2006, fig. 329.

Fig. 6: Nicola Chiarenza after Mertens 2006, fig. 332.

Fig. 7: After Tusa 1983, 129.

Fig. 8: Nicola Chiarenza after Mertens 2006, fig. 328.

Fig. 9: a–b: after Pugliese Carrattelli 1985, figs. 64–65; c: after Poole 1876, 141 no. 38; d: after Hill 1903, pl. 6, 5.

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