

## DOMESTIC STRUCTURES IN GRAECO-ROMAN SYENE (MODERN ASWAN)

Houses are stages for social behaviour. Both their physical shape and the assemblages found in them provide snapshots of the framework for human activity at a given time. The modern way, how houses are built and planned and the theory behind it have a major impact on the perspectives of the different archaeological schools. Houses are ›read‹ by classical archaeologists<sup>1</sup>, calculated by behaviourist psychologists<sup>2</sup> and seen as important socio-philosophical indicators<sup>3</sup>. All these approaches have their merits, but are of limited usefulness for the problem at hand. Few houses in the Egyptian χώρα show highly accentuated features such as paintings, mosaics etc. Simple mud brick buildings give little away except for the ground plan of the lowest floor and more or less attributable collections of simple objects of daily use.

Behaviourist analytical approaches produce highly suggestive maps based on the integration of houses, meaning the accessibility of a room in relation to all other rooms and the immediate environment of the building<sup>4</sup>. As this method requires only ground plans and city maps for reasonable, even quantifiable results<sup>5</sup>, and does not depend on living inhabitants for a proper sociological field study, there is no need to recreate the absent individual in a post-processualist way<sup>6</sup>.

Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* and his model of the individual as a player in a defined ›field‹ (the social and spatial setting for his activities) with ›capital‹ (material, cultural and symbolic capital) at his disposal is applicable to a study on simple domestic architecture in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Houses are both part of the player's capital, enabling him to represent and enforce certain ways of interactions from his visitors<sup>7</sup> and of the field defining and limiting his activities. From the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC onwards, major new influences came to Egypt, mainly from the Greek Eastern Mediterranean. Applying Bourdieu's terminology, players with a completely new idea of field entered Egypt. During the Ptolemaic period, the traditional Egyptian field was confronted with the new Greek concept in an unprecedented manner. Bourdieu states that in such a case the new field has to be adapted but also forces the existing field, the objective structure, to change within the limits set by the predominant *habitus*<sup>8</sup>. How evident is this relation between the old traditional and the new alien idea of domestic life in the archaeological record of Graeco-Roman Egypt?

The regrettably poor knowledge of ancient Egyptian settlements limits the basis of a study on their smallest units, the houses. The reasons for the deplorable state of settlement archaeology have been discussed *in extenso* elsewhere<sup>9</sup>.

As with the Egyptian city as a whole<sup>10</sup>, papyrological information gives unique insights into the contemporaneous perception of architecture, both concerning rather basic aspects like the price of living

<sup>1</sup> A. WALLACE-HADRILL, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton 1996) 3–16.

<sup>2</sup> B. HILLIER – J. HANSON, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge 1984).

<sup>3</sup> BOURDIEU 2005 with a concise summary of the concept of *habitus*.

<sup>4</sup> PEONIS – WINEMAN 2002, 273–275; cf. ALSTON 2002, 55 f. fig. 3, 2. 3; 107 fig. 3, 16 for the application of justified graphs in a study on the Roman city in Egypt, albeit without further interpretation.

<sup>5</sup> PEONIS – WINEMAN 2002, 272.

<sup>6</sup> I. HODDER, *Reading the Past. Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge 1986) 6–10.

<sup>7</sup> R. E. BLANTON, *Houses and Households* (London – New York 1994) 14 f. Houses are an important part of the ›indexial communication‹. Due to the high cost of their construction, they are reliable indicators of the position of a household within society.

<sup>8</sup> BOURDIEU 2005, 47.

<sup>9</sup> D. W. RATHBONE, *Settlement and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, in: A. BÜLOW-JACOBSEN (ed.), *Proceedings of the 20<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Papyrologists, Copenhagen, 23–29 August, 1992* (Copenhagen 1994) 136–145; R. S. BAGNALL, *Archaeology and Papyrology*, *JRA* 1, 1988, 197–202.

<sup>10</sup> ALSTON 2002, esp. 44–127 on houses; W. MÜLLER, *Urbanism in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, in: M. BIETAK – E. CZERNY – I. FORSTNER-MÜLLER (ed.), *Cities and Urbanism. Proceedings of the Conference, Vienna 2009* (Vienna 2010) 217–256.

space, constructional details or the ownership structure of buildings, as well as reflections of a more aesthetic nature<sup>11</sup>. Papyri also provide us with names for persons and parts of their material world. Both individuals and labels for parts of houses derived from the papyrological material<sup>12</sup> are dislocated from the buildings they owned or the details they described<sup>13</sup>. These labels are crucial for the analysis of the ground plan of a house in modern architectural theory<sup>14</sup>. The spatial reality behind the written record can only be gained from analogies with accepted (albeit hypothetical) modern interpretations of ground plans.

As research had to deal with the sad remains of an unprecedented dismantlement of an urban culture by Sebakh digging, sometimes on an industrial scale – empty skeletons of buildings<sup>15</sup> – traditional approaches to the house in Graeco-Roman Egypt usually are of an architectural nature based on papyrological evidence or on purely functional interpretations of ground plans<sup>16</sup>.

The notion that the hermeneutical approach of the Post-Processual school of archaeology might be less dependent on ›hard‹ archaeological data than on more traditional traits of the discipline and therefore suited better for the task of interpreting a not documented and thus virtual archaeological record, seems to be rather dubious<sup>17</sup>. To boost archaeological research and focus on yet undisturbed sites with architecture and material structure still in context seems to be a much more promising strategy. The ongoing excavations of the German Archaeological Institute on Elephantine Island have produced such domestic assemblages, mostly from the Pharaonic period. The critical discussion of formation processes in Middle Kingdom houses on Elephantine Island is also valid for significantly later material<sup>18</sup> like the findings of its eastern neighbour, the excavations in modern Aswan.

The joint urban archaeological project of the Swiss Institute for Architectural and Archaeological Research on Ancient Egypt in Cairo and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) Aswan<sup>19</sup> started in 2000 and up to now has excavated 53 areas within the area covered by modern Aswan<sup>20</sup>.

The town of Syene was a special case within Egypt, both topographically and functionally<sup>21</sup>. While Elephantine was the administrative and religious centre during the period of interest, Syene was part of a settlement cluster, probably representing an offensive land based checkpoint considerably more exposed than the protected island<sup>22</sup>

<sup>11</sup> MAEHLER 1983.

<sup>12</sup> G. HUSSON, *Oikia. Le vocabulaire de la maison privée en Égypte d'après les papyrus grecs* (Paris 1983).

<sup>13</sup> There are rare exceptions. Cf. two examples from the Aswan region: VON PILGRIM 1998 on the topography of Elephantine in the Persian period. His reconstruction is based on Aramaic papyri; cf. VON PILGRIM 1998, 491 fig. 3 with a map of the city quarter. DIJKSTRA 2007, esp. 181. 207–209 on the Pathermouthis Archive. Anyhow, it has to be remarked that, even if the findspot is correct, the question if the archive was found *in situ* or had been deposited by Sebakh-diggers is impossible to decide. – M. SCHENTULEIT – C. LIEDTKE, Dime online: Eine prosopographische und topographische Datenbank zu Soknopaiu Nesos, in: LIPPERT –SCHENTULEIT 2008, 217–222 esp. 220 f. on a project of combining the virtual papyrological map of Soknopaiu Nesos with the archaeological evidence.

<sup>14</sup> PEONIS – WINEMAN 2002, 283–285.

<sup>15</sup> B. A. AULT – C. C. NEVETT, Digging Houses: Archaeologies of Classical and Hellenistic Greek Domestic Assemblages, in: P. M. ALLISON (ed.), *The Archaeology of Household Activities* (London 1999) 43–56 esp. 44.

<sup>16</sup> M. NOVICKA, *La maison privée dans l'Égypte ptolémaïque* (Wrocław 1969); cf. ARNOLD 2003 for an extensive study on late Roman housing on Elephantine.

<sup>17</sup> P. VAN MINNEN, House-to-House Enquiries: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Roman Karanis, ZPE 100, 1994, 227–251 esp. 227. 229–232.

<sup>18</sup> C. VON PILGRIM, Untersuchungen in der Stadt des Mittleren Reichs und der Zweiten Zwischenzeit, Elephantine 18 = AV 91 (Mainz 1996) 18–22 esp. 21 f. for a discussion on meaning and use of the label *in situ*. Rather than a Boolean use of the term, a more gradual agency-related application is argued for; cf. M. MORRIS, Occupation Debris and Abandonment Events and Processes, in: S. ROSKAMS (ed.), *Interpreting Stratigraphy. Site Evaluation, Recording Procedures and Stratigraphic Analysis. Papers Presented to the Interpreting Stratigraphy Conferences 1993–1997*, BARIntSer 910 (Oxford 2000) 25–34 esp. 33 table 4, 3 for types of abandonment and the kinds of assemblages they produce.

<sup>19</sup> Directed by C. von Pilgrim and M. El-Bealy. The work is conducted in close cooperation with M. El-Bialy, M. Ed-Din Mustafa and Inspectors of the SCA Aswan.

<sup>20</sup> The results are presented in biennial preliminary reports; cf. VON PILGRIM – BRUHN – KELANY 2004; VON PILGRIM et al. 2006 and VON PILGRIM et al. forthcoming.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. VON PILGRIM – BRUHN – KELANY 2004, 119–124 for an account of previous research on Syene and the historical topography and VON PILGRIM et al. 2006, 217–220 for an evaluation of the modern topographical setting.

<sup>22</sup> W. KAISER – P. GROSSMANN – G. HAENY – H. JARITZ, Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. Vierter Grabungsbericht, MDAIK 30, 1974, 65–90 esp. 70 characterise Syene and Elephantine as twin cities. J. LOCHER, Topographie und Geschichte der Region am Ersten Nilkatarakt in Griechisch-Römischer Zeit, ArchPF Beih. 5 (Stuttgart – Leipzig 1999) 74–80: Syene was in most respects

but perfectly located for controlling the traffic on the land route bypassing the non-navigable First Cataract<sup>23</sup>. Papyrological data on houses in Syene are scarce and date to the late Roman period<sup>24</sup>.

Area 15 covered more than 650 sq. m. and was located in the immediate vicinity of the ancient riverbank in the centre of the Graeco-Roman town (fig. 1). The level of the building ground was within the reach of the Nile flood<sup>25</sup> during the earliest strata, K and J. The consequences, structural risks to the walls and rather inconvenient living conditions, were accepted due to the advantageous vicinity of the riverbank, the interface between traffic on the river and on the land, where the special checkpoint status of Syene came into effect. The structures in Area 15 are either part of a harbour installation or located in its close vicinity.

The building material used for the construction of the houses in Syene was unfired mud-brick throughout all building-phases. Stone elements were rare and used for decorative or structural reasons only. Walls usually rested on stone foundations. The stone used for the foundations is chronologically significant: While silicified sandstone<sup>26</sup> predominated during the Late Period, rose granite (mostly broken quarry debris) was the preferred material for foundations from the Ptolemaic Period onwards. Stone foundations were an important price-setting aspect of the houses, frequently mentioned in contracts<sup>27</sup>.

S. Ladstätter will present selected pottery assemblages from Area 15 in Syene/ Aswan, dating to Dynasty 30, the Early Ptolemaic Period and the major urban phase of the town from the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC onwards. The material shall illustrate the chronological framework<sup>28</sup> and the socio-economic situation of one of the southernmost towns of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds<sup>29</sup>. These assemblages appear in the text of this paper as numbered complexes.

The garrison-phase of Syene is evident in the earliest excavated layers of Area 15 (strata K to J) (fig. 2. 3)<sup>30</sup>. These phases date to Dynasty 26 respectively 27, the Persian period<sup>31</sup>. The Saitic layers were already under the water-table at the time of excavation and were therefore investigated in a rather cursory manner. The well-preserved Persian structures set the framework for all later periods. A street grid with an east-west road and a narrow north-south passage had presumably already been established in stratum K. A massive stone wall running north-south in the westernmost part of the excavated area probably limited the ancient town towards the Nile. The structures to the north of the east-west road were covered by modern houses. The north-south passage divided the quarter into two blocks. The western block consisted of Building 9 and remained in use with little alterations in the ground plan well into Dynasty 30. The perimeter wall to the west of the building most presumably ended with the northern limit of Building 9 and formed a distinct north-western corner. The east-west road probably constituted one of the main thoroughfares to the Nile, leaving the town through a gate to the north-west of Area 15. Originally, the nucleus of Building 9 (Rooms 5–12) had probably been planned as a house in its own right<sup>32</sup>.

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except tax administration secondary to Elephantine. Taxes from Elephantine had to be paid at the bank of Syene. This special function of the town may be due to its traditional checkpoint-status.

<sup>23</sup> H. JARITZ, *The Investigation of the Ancient Wall Extending from Aswan to Philae*, MDAIK 43, 1987, 67–74; H. JARITZ, *The Investigation of the Ancient Wall Extending from Aswan to Philae. Second Preliminary Report*, MDAIK 49, 1993, 107–132.

<sup>24</sup> HUSSON 1990; DIJKSTRA 2007.

<sup>25</sup> The floors of stratum J are at an elevation of 90.5 m asl. The average flood level for the Late Period is estimated to be as high as 91.5 m asl; cf. S. J. SEIDLMAYER, *Historische und Moderne Nilstände*, ACHET A 1 (Berlin 2001) 90 tab. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Kindly communicated by P. Storemyr.

<sup>27</sup> S. PASEK, *Hawara. Eine ägyptische Siedlung in hellenistischer Zeit I* (Berlin 2007) 53 f. Besides the stone foundations, wooden doorjambes and other wooden parts are mentioned. cf. ALSTON 2002, 63 for a 3<sup>rd</sup> c. example of an exorbitantly expensive house completely made of stone.

<sup>28</sup> The coins associated with the assemblages have been studied by H.-C. Noeske.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. S. LADSTÄTTER in this volume.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. VON PILGRIM et al. forthcoming for a detailed preliminary report on the results from Area 15.

<sup>31</sup> The Aramaic papyri found on Elephantine are a precious source for the history of the Persian military in Syene and Elephantine. cf. B. PORTEN, *Archives from Elephantine. The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (London 1968) for translations and interpretations of these documents.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. A. KREKELER, *Stadtgrabung am Westkom von Elephantine/Wohnbauten des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.*, in: M. BIETAK (ed.), *House and Palace in Ancient Egypt*, UZK 16 = DenkschrWien 14 (Vienna 1996) 107–115 esp. 111 plan 9 for a very similar ground plan on Elephantine.

During stratum H the eastern block changed considerably with the construction of Buildings 4, 5, 6 and 8. This phase dates to Dynasty 30. The buildings were filled in with settlement debris in connection with construction activities during the Early Ptolemaic Period.

The complete ground plan of Buildings 4 and 5 (figs. 2, 3) lay within the limits of the excavation. The layout of both houses shows a high degree of symmetry. The number of rooms and their arrangement were very similar. Both buildings showed a closed front towards the east-west road and shared a massive foundation made of silicified sandstone. Feeble walls subdivided the limited space between Buildings 4 and 5 and Buildings 6 and 8. A wall at its western end, which abutted the stone foundation of the northern houses, closed the passage and thus created a set of courtyards. Building 4 is of a slightly later date than Building 5 with its narrow eastern wall leaning against the sturdier western wall of the eastern house.

The entrance into Building 5 is situated on a (hypothetical) north-south-street to its immediate east. A door led into Room 4, the main distributor of the house. From there a staircase constructed around a massive stone pillar led to the upper floors. A narrow corridor under the staircase led to a door connecting the house to a small open courtyard to the south. Doors led into Rooms 1 and 3. Room 2, without any functional indicators, was only accessible from Room 1 and was the most intimate part of the layout. Applying above described analytical terminology, it was the deepest Room of the house, meaning that, seen from the entrance, more rooms had to be passed in order to reach it than for any other part of the house<sup>33</sup>. Room 3 contained two working-platforms. Room 1 most probably constituted a courtyard. In the earliest phase, a narrow wall (half a brick wide) subdivided the room into two working areas. Two *pithoi*, one for each room-half, were buried in the floor up to their shoulders (fig. 5)<sup>34</sup>. The eastern one was covered with a stone bowl serving as a lid. In the northeastern corner of Room 1, sandstone slabs protected both the floor and the walls. Two sandstone lintels were placed on top of the pavement. A sand stone basin, found among of the debris accumulated in Room 1, fitted exactly on top of the construction (fig. 4 shows a hypothetical reconstruction)<sup>35</sup>. Building 4 shows a similar layout. The main entrance into the house was from the north-south passage. A makeshift staircase consisting of reused stepping-stones bridged the difference in elevation between the threshold and the street surface at the time of construction. Room 2 figured as main distributor. The staircase in Room 3 was more centrally located than in Building 5 and made a much more massive impression. A door led from Room 2 into an L-shaped small room under the staircase. A small door connected Room 2 to the courtyard at the back of the house where again a staircase was necessary to reach its significantly deeper surface. The most prominent door led into Room 1. Layout and size of the presumable courtyard are similar to the respective room in Building 5. Like in Building 5, the surface of the courtyard was at a deeper level than the other rooms of the house. A staircase connected Room 2 to Room 1. The position of Room 4 is similar to Room 2 in Building 5, making the layout of both houses nearly mirror-symmetrical. There are no conclusive functional indicators concerning the earliest phases of the house. In analogy to Building 5, a hydraulic installation was situated in the north-western corner of the room. Only the sandstone slabs protecting the inner corner of the room remained in place when granaries were constructed both in the north-western and north-eastern corners of the room.

Buildings 4 and 5 existed over a long period of time. Subsequent changes in their layouts were most probably connected to the new character of the city quarter during Dynasty 30. The overall military character of the precinct in the Persian period, evident both in the closed and thoroughly planned layout<sup>36</sup> and the weaponry (arrow-heads and some spearheads) that was found in significant quantities in the rooms, was replaced by a more domestic setting, at least in the eastern part of the site. The old massive mud brick wall was removed down to its lower courses made of sand stone and replaced with a narrow wall (1.5 bricks wide).

<sup>33</sup> PEONIS – WINEMAN 2002, 273 f.

<sup>34</sup> D. A. ASTON, Pottery from the Late New Kingdom to the Early Ptolemaic Period, Elephantine 19 = AV 95 (Mainz 1999) 266 no. 2305 on a similar vessel buried in the courtyard of House P on Elephantine Island. Papyri associated with the respective phase of the house gave a date in the reign of Nektanebo II.

<sup>35</sup> TRÜMPER 1998, 234 cat. no. 35. The bath in the Maison de l'Hermès comprised a similar albeit much more luxurious installation. The location of a basin in a courtyard has parallels in the Greek world; cf. TRÜMPER 1998, 65.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. KREKELER 1994, 27. On the western Kôm on Elephantine island, the advent of Persian influence brought a new more organised layout with narrow passages between the houses for ventilation and light.

While during stratum H/2b Building 9 had been in use with minute changes to its layout, stratum H/2a saw a complete reorganisation of the compound (fig. 6). After the *nucleus* of Building 9 had been dismantled and the ruins were later filled in with a massive layer of settlement debris (complexes 6-15-78, 6-15-120), a new courtyard came into existence, limited to the west by the perimeter wall and to the north by the former northern part of Building 9. Rooms 1–3 were now parts of a building in its own right with at least two floors (to the east of Room 1 a new staircase was installed). The north-south passage became part of the courtyard when it was blocked by a battery of three ovens, built against the wall that had blocked the courtyard to the south of Building 4 from the former street. The eastern wall of Building 9 was completely dismantled. To the south of the new courtyard, a new house, Building 7, came into existence. More than 30 bread ovens organised in several batteries and a vat found *in situ* in the northern part of the courtyard, which was either used for the preparation of dough or the brewing of beer, are evidence of a centralised food production.

The eastern building block did not change as drastically. Due to the accumulation of waste (complex 6-15-246), the surfaces outside Buildings 4 and 5 had risen to a level where the former difference in elevation between the in- and outdoor areas of the houses was at first more and more on one level and finally reversed when the floors lay significantly below street level. The elevated surface made the courtyard between the two eastern blocks of buildings accessible from the southern and the northern houses. The space formerly allotted to one house only was consequently further subdivided and four small open compartments with two ovens each came into existence. Until the beginning of stratum H/1, the ovens were completely covered by debris and the now redundant doors communicating with the courtyards, like the door in the southern wall of Building 5/Room 4, were walled up. This material, sealed beneath a massive layer of mud-brick debris from the final collapse of the building, dates the abandonment of buildings 4 and 5 and sets a *terminus post quem* for the building effort at the beginning of stratum G. The pottery assemblage from Building 5/Room 3 (complex 6-15-82) is representative of this material. A significant proportion of the broken vessels under the debris were storage vessels and large vats probably connected to the brewing of beer. At the very end of the life span of Buildings 4 and 5, their former ground floors were completely subterranean, not so much suited for human habitation as for storage, probably of food produced and processed in the courtyard to the west.

The new Building 7 may have served as an administrative unit attached to the ›bakery‹. The ground plan of this house showed a symmetry comparable to the nucleus of Building 9 with two rectangular rooms to the south and north and a flight of smaller rooms in its centre with a possible staircase to the east of Room 5. Room 2, most probably a courtyard, had a round granary in the shape of a beehive in its south-western corner. Due to the bad state of preservation of the building, most of it had to be reconstructed from brick retrieval pits in the approximate shape of the former walls, the entrance situation in the northern part is rather obscure. Room 6, another courtyard, was entered via a large door to its southeast at exactly the same location as the main entrance into Building 9.

While significantly fewer weapons were found in the layers of this period, the area of the compound was even more clearly defined than before. A sandstone threshold with a hinge to its east found at the former intersection of the north-south passage and east-west-street were evidence of a closable door at this location. This new installation controlled the entrance into the large open-air kitchen.

The houses of stratum H are well established Egyptian types<sup>37</sup>. Buildings 4 and 5 represent so-called tower houses<sup>38</sup>. Typical features are a relatively small ground area and several floors<sup>39</sup>. The outer walls are banked, the brick-layers are tapered. The larger Building 5 comprised an area of 58 sq. m., the upper rooms were very small, especially taking into account the obtuse angle of the outer walls, the massive staircase and the fact that Room 1 was probably an open courtyard<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> KREKELER 1994, 30. Like on Elephantine, the living-area of the houses consists of a ›Dreiraumgruppe‹.

<sup>38</sup> ARNOLD 2003, 172–177 on the ›Turmhaus‹ relating to late Roman houses on Elephantine. Already HUSSON 1990, 127–129 draws parallels between the Persian houses mentioned in the Aramaic documents from Elephantine and the late Roman houses known from the Paternouthis Archive.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. ALSTON 2002, 59 on a house from Oxyrhynchos with seven floors (P. Oxy. XXXIV 2719).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. D. VALBELLE – M. ABD EL-MAKSUD, Tell el-Herr les niveaux hellénistiques et du Haut-Empire (Paris 2007) 26 fig. 16 for similar houses from Tell El-Herr. The houses of the îlot central de la rangée sud show a nearly identical ground plan. They are dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC.

The filling in of the ruins of stratum H (complexes 6-15-52 [Building 5/Room 3], 6-15-83 [Building 5/Room 2] and 6-15-146 [Building 5/Room 4]) dates to the time of Ptolemy III or IV, more probably to Ptolemy III. The infill of a pit cutting into the perimeter wall of stratum H/1, which was in turn cut by the western casemate wall, gives a *terminus* for the beginning of stratum G (complex 5-15-256). The structures of this stratum, the most prominent among them being a dynastic memorial, were parts of a monumental redesign of the proposed older gate area in stratums J–H<sup>41</sup>. They brought about a new organisation of space that to some extent followed the limits of the old quarter: a casemate wall at approximately the same position as the older perimeter wall newly accentuated the western limit, while the east-west road was still in use. The north-south passage, already given up at the end of stratum H, was now completely overbuilt and a new north-south-street came into existence to the east of the main building. The outline of later Insula 1 was thus defined.

The north-eastern part of the building was completely redesigned in stratum F after a short period of squatter activity with the construction of a bathhouse (fig. 7). The numismatic evidence puts this activity in the time of Ptolemy VI or the co-regency of Ptolemy VI and VIII.

The bathhouse (figs. 7–9) consisted of a central bathing room (Room 6) and several adjoining rooms. A small wall subdivided Room 6 into an elevated bathing area (2.28 × 3.92 m) with two hipbaths and one regular tub, and a lower (difference in elevation approximately 0.3 m), approximately square entrance area (2.2 × 2.23 m) in the south.

The lower portions of the northern hipbath were preserved while the southern one had already been removed in Antiquity (fig. 10). The preserved bath is of the same type as numerous other examples from Egypt<sup>42</sup>. The pedestal is mostly made of fired bricks and is coated in several layers of fine white plaster imitating a carefully crafted stone plinth. The semi-circular basin for the feet was also coated in white plaster and measured 0.57 × 0.66 m. Wastewater was collected in a shallow stone bowl at its deepest point on the eastern end, and was most probably removed by means of a sponge. A 0.31 m wide bench, constructed of fired bricks and only preserved in its lower courses, was built against the western wall of Room 6.

Of the tub itself (fig. 11), only a distinct impression in the floor and a small base made of mortar (1.63 m × 0.55 m) remained. All bathing installations were grouped in the western part of the room, protected by the intermediary wall to the south against draft or views from the door in the western part of the southern wall. The very distinct elevation of the bathing area facilitated cleaning and the disposal of wastewater<sup>43</sup> through a pipe in the western part of the south wall of Room 6, at the deepest point of the room (fig. 12)<sup>44</sup>. The two parts of the room were connected by a narrow (0.70 m wide) vaulted non-closable passage. The bathers entered via a small pass-through in the eastern wall. This pass-through was combined with a small basin measuring 0.45 × 0.94 m projecting approximately 0.35 m into the room.

Except for the pass-through, the bathing area was not connected with the other parts of the house; it was entered through an extra door. The southern facade of the house was covered by modern structures and could not be investigated, a special adornment for the main entrance into the house is alas to be expected. In addition, the public system of wastewater disposal and its connection to the sewer of the bath has to remain speculative for the time being. The more domestic parts of the house were entered via a more modest entrance into Room 5. A worn stepping-stone immediately outside of the door probably became necessary because the bathhouse was at a significantly higher level than its surroundings. The foundations and the aboveground courses of the walls were made of broken rose granite rising from the deeper area to the west of the house. The reasons for this elevation remain obscure but are probably due to the elevated bathroom. Room 6 had a

<sup>41</sup> W. MÜLLER, Hellenistic Aswan, in: Proceedings of the First Cataract Workshop in Berlin (in press).

<sup>42</sup> Athribis: K. MYSLIWIEC, Rescue Excavations at Tell-Atrib in 1985-1995, in: K. MYSLIWIEC – Z. SZETYŁŁO (eds.), Tell Atrib 1985–1995 (Warsaw 2000) 33–35 pl. 6a. b plan 3 (two hip-baths with identical dimensions).

<sup>43</sup> TRÜMPER 1998, 205. The floor of the bath in the Maison de l’Hermès (TRÜMPER 1998, cat. no. 35) also shows a distinct decline towards the drain. Cf. K. REBER, Die klassischen und hellenistischen Wohnhäuser im Westquartier, Eretria 10 (Lausanne 1998) 137 f. for a similar situation in Eretria.

<sup>44</sup> There were no traces of a public water supply or wastewater disposal except for one open conduit made of pottery-elements to the north of Building 5, running approximately in the centre of the east-west road. It dates to stratum H. A water pipe consisting of clay pipes found in the north-south street was running in a north-south direction and was clearly from a later date than stratum B–C.

massive foundation of 18 cu. m. of broken rose granite. As a protective measure against water-exposure, the lower courses of the above-ground walls within the immediate bathing area were made of fired bricks. The construction of the floors was very elaborate. The uppermost floor, finely tempered lime plaster (0.03 m) rested on a thin layer of slightly coarser mortar with a roughened (chisel marks) surface (0.01 m) followed by a 0.04 m thick layer of coarse mortar, tempered with pottery and broken fired bricks. Big pebbles (0.05–0.1 m in diameter) in coarse lime mortar constitute the lowest layer of the floor, sitting on top of loose material covering the granite foundation (fig. 13).

The bath uncovered in Area 15 was not just part of a house. It had its own special entrance and was not connected to the other rooms of the building. They were subordinate to the central bathing function. Rooms 1, 3, 4 and 5 were damaged by later constructions beyond any further interpretation. Room 5 (complex 5-15-461) contained a fireplace, probably already in use during stratum F. The very simple installation consisted of two fired bricks with a layer of burnt mud on top of them. The narrow corridor to the east of the bathroom was entered from Room 2, which was probably connected to the western set of rooms. The corridor consisted of a ›service-area‹ just outside the pass-through cum basin, and a staircase further to the south. Four to five steps were preserved of this staircase at the time of excavation. As the construction of reused fired bricks with one stepping stone still *in situ* made a rather makeshift impression, the staircase probably did not belong to the original building concept.

The bath house is a rare but significant aspect of Hellenistic domestic culture within Syene. While the number and arrangement of tubs follow the Egyptian standard for smaller public baths, other details of the installation have close parallels in the Greek world<sup>45</sup>.

At the time of construction, the bathhouse was rather isolated with the ruins of stratum G still around it. Gradually Insula 1 (fig. 14) with its five living units came into existence. The bathhouse now became Unit 2 with Unit 5 as its southern and Unit 1 its western neighbour. The northern wall of Unit 5 blocked the old entrance into the bathroom. Both doors, from the bathroom and from Room 9, now communicated with the corridor Room 9a. From this room a door led into a spacious courtyard to the west at a significantly lower level than the former bathhouse. The space for the courtyard, situated in the centre of Insula 1, was left open between the Units and was probably used by the inhabitants of Units 1 and 2. Remains of a hydraulic installation built against the northern wall of Unit 5 probably constituted the remains of a drinking trough. It was made of fired bricks and a superimposed wall of fired bricks protected the face of the wall. The trough itself was badly damaged by later activities. Traces of wooden constructions of a temporary nature, such as small postholes, are further evidence of some flexible agricultural use of the courtyard. The stepping-stone in front of the door into Room 9 shows a distinct dell at its western end, hinting at the now predominant direction of passers by with the stone now serving as a threshold between Room 9a and the courtyard.

While the bath of stratum F was still of a more public nature<sup>46</sup>, the construction of Insula 1 around it made public access more difficult and the bathroom part of a private house, Unit 2. Usually one tub was deemed sufficient for a private bathroom<sup>47</sup>, therefore the southern hip-bath was dismantled and replaced with an additional bench. The tub was probably removed as well. The door of the bathroom was walled up, a haphazard staircase consisting of piled up reused blocks was put in front of the former door in order to reach the elevated threshold (fig. 15). This change in layout was due to a staircase constructed in the eastern part of Room 9a (the first stepping-stone was still *in situ* in the eastern section).

The main entrance into the house was now from the north-south-street via a staircase at the northernmost part of the eastern wall of Unit 2. The staircase had a north-south extension of approximately 3 m and a

<sup>45</sup> Cf. E. KUNZE – E. SCHLEIF, *OIBer 4* (Berlin 1944) 47 pl. 16 for an example from Olympia. The large public bath comprised 20 hip-baths and has a rectangular ground plan with a basin and pass-through at a similar position and with exactly the same dimensions as in Area 15. Like in Edfu (K. MICHAŁOWSKI, *Tell Edfou, Fouilles franco-polonaises 1* [Cairo 1937] 65–77 figs. 29–31 pl. 7) the basin and pass-through are connected to a heating installation with a boiler. No traces of a *prae-furnium* were detected in the bath from Syene.

<sup>46</sup> TRÜMPER 1998, 65 interprets the position of sweating baths next to public streets with an extra entrance as an indication of an at least semi public use.

<sup>47</sup> W. HOEPFNER – E. L. SCHWANDNER, *Haus und Stadt im Klassischen Griechenland. Wohnen in der Klassischen Polis I* (Munich 1994) 320.

preserved width of 0.5 m<sup>48</sup>. The door was most probably situated next to the north-eastern corner of Unit 2. A column-base found in the vicinity fitted perfectly into the prepared space between two sandstone blocks protecting the corner, hinting at a special architectural accentuation of this part of the house.

Analysing the development of the bathhouse in the way mentioned at the beginning of the paper, the integration of the bathing area was very low in stratum F and significantly higher when it became a central part of Unit 2. While during stratum F and the beginning of stratum E the integration of the bath has to be understood with respect to the whole quarter around it, the accessibility from outside Unit 2 became much more difficult during strata E to D.

Due to its gradual development, the suggested periodisation of strata E to C and the synchronisation between the different units are only approximations. As Units 1 and 4 were only partly preserved, they are not described in minute detail here.

In stratum D the area of the central courtyard was reduced with the construction of Unit 2/Room 12, thus blocking the entrance into the courtyard from Unit 2/Room 9a, and Unit 1/Room 9a. These new rooms occupied half of the former courtyard. Two ovens in the south-western corner of the courtyard served for food production. Room 12, a simple small *triclinium* with room for two couches, served as the *andron*<sup>49</sup> of the new house as did Room 7a for the inhabitants of Unit 5 were, besides the typical ground-plan, remains of white wall plaster and a robust terrazzo floor were still *in situ*.

Little can be said about the function of the other rooms of Unit 5 during stratum D. A large number of faience-beads and half-finished faience products in the south-eastern-most room of the house implicate a possible faience workshop (complex 5-15-258). A stone bowl in its centre served as a simple brazier.

At the beginning of stratum D, the bath was still in use. Until stratum C, probably already during stratum D, the bathroom was abandoned when the drastically reduced available space within the house finally led to new priorities of a purely domestic nature and the luxurious installation became redundant.

The old eastern wall of the room was removed, a new wall subdivided the space, thus creating Room 10 and fusing Rooms 5 and 8. The bath and the staircase in Room 8 were dismantled; pieces of white wall plaster and other debris were used to fill in the deeper part of former Room 8. There was no direct connection between Rooms 10 and 5/8. Room 5/8 was accessible from Room 7. Room 10 served as a kitchen, a drainage vessel (a decorated *pithos* with intentionally perforated bottom) was put into the retrieval pit of the former eastern wall of the bathroom. A stepping stone, presumably belonging to the former staircase in Room 8, was now used as a worktop. In the north-western corner of Room 10, another vessel was partly embedded in the floor. This vessel had a complete bottom and served as a storage facility. Such vessels were a common occurrence in strata E to C. Their function was similar to the *pithoi* in Building 5, but of a significantly smaller size.

In Room 2, on top of two sub-structural vaults, two bread ovens were constructed. The very low vaults (0.4 m high) with a mud-brick pavement on top of them indicate that the room was originally roofed and later transformed into a courtyard used for the preparation of food. Substructures like those supporting Room 2 were frequently encountered in Area 15 and in other parts of ancient Syene. As no intact *in situ* ensembles of pottery or other parts of the original inventories of the above ground rooms of Insula 1 were found, sub-structural vaults sealed with their original content, when the room on top of it collapsed or the layout of the house made it redundant, are indispensable both for the chronological framework and for functional considerations. Of special interest in this respect are the substructures that were constructed in order to compensate for the different levels between the surfaces of the former courtyard and the floors of Unit 2. Unit 1/Room 9a, just to the north of the *andron* of Unit 2, was found mostly intact and full of complete vessels (complex 5-15-165). The apex of the vault was approximately 0.6 m high, and therefore too small to contain anything but small vessels (fig. 16). The contents of all these vaults date to the end of stratum D.

Stratum C saw further minor changes in Unit 2 and a complete change in the layout of Unit 5 where a corridor, Room 12, now effectively separated the unit into two parts. The three southern rooms did not

<sup>48</sup> P. VIREECK, *Philadelphieia. Die Gründung einer hellenistischen Militärkolonie in Ägypten, Morgenland 16* (Leipzig 1928) 9 on the elevated entrances into the houses of Philadelphia.

<sup>49</sup> ALSTON 2002, 83 f. on papyrological evidence for *andrones* and *symposia*. For an example of a *reak andron* from Alexandria cf. MCKENZIE 2007, 69 fig. 97.



undergo any changes, while the northern part was completely redesigned. The former *andron* was dismantled and a spacious courtyard was created in the north-western part of the house. *Mastabas*, traditional Egyptian benches, lined the walls of the courtyard. Like in Unit 1, the floors of Unit 5 had to be adapted to the higher floor level of Unit 2. Instead of constructing substructures, the rooms were filled in with loose material and settlement debris until the intended floor level was reached. Only the floors in the southern part of the unit were preserved.

Tree pits in the east-west road in front of Insula 1 probably served as substitutes for a proper *porticus*. One of the tree pits near the junction of the north-south and east-west roads blocked the north-south road, which was thus no longer a major line of communication within the town's infrastructure.

Insula 2, during stratum D still to the east of Area 15 (only detected in a small test-trench), appeared at the beginning of stratum C within the excavated area to the east of the north-south street. Only a small subterranean vaulted chamber or substructure has remained of Unit 3. The small vaulted room was filled with layers of windblown sand (implicating an extended period of abandonment) that covered a coin of Tiberius, which gives an indication for an early Roman terminus for the abandonment of stratum C.

Although the later development of the *insulae* is outside the chronological scope of this paper a concise outline shall illustrate the element of continuity. During stratum B–C, the inner layout of Insula 1 remained mostly obscure due to the severe damage caused by modern construction work. The most significant changes concerned its outer face and immediate surroundings. The east-west road was paved with sandstone slabs with a *porticus* attached to the northern front of Insula 1. Sandstone platforms with massive foundations at the opposite corners of the *insulae* (figs. 17. 18) probably constituted bases for pylons belonging to an arch or some other monument accentuating the intersection of the streets. A small shrine or *exedra* to the very north of the site, exactly facing the north-south street, completes the new setting thus transforming the rather disparate elements of the Ptolemaic and Early Roman periods into urban space, a smaller image of what happened all over the eastern part of the Roman Empire and had become a model of Roman cityscape<sup>50</sup>. Excavations near Area 15, primarily in Areas 6 and 9, provided further information on Late Roman Aswan thus allowing for assumptions concerning the local setting of the area within the town as a whole.

In Area 9<sup>51</sup>, the western limit of Insula 1 and the paved road were detected in the eastern section. The road was at a significantly lower level than in Area 15, implying a pronounced slope between the areas, probably caused by the former riverbank. It was overbuilt from stratum E onwards. The western front of the *insula* during stratum B–C shows a column built into its north-western corner<sup>52</sup>. The *exedra* facing the intersection of the two streets in Area 15 had its counterpart in Area 9<sup>53</sup> where an apsidal building is facing the north-south street to the west of the *insula* (fig. 19).

In Area 6 a baptistery and numerous components of monumental architecture, like rose granite columns and capitals, were found<sup>54</sup>. These results confirmed the assumption that placed the centre of Late Roman Syene in the proximity of the German Hospital<sup>55</sup>. This hypothesis goes well with the findings in Areas 9 and 15, where the paved road and the *exedrae* indicate architecture of a representative character further to the north. The pavement ended with the eastern limit of the *exedra* in Area 15 and was restricted to the east-west road.

The available surface area of the living units was more and more reduced over time, as was the width of the streets. Unit 2 started as a bathhouse within a not yet fully developed area. In stratum E its ground area was approximately 192 sq. m., reduced at the beginning of stratum D to 122 sq. m., in stratum C to 106 sq. m. During stratum C two independent sub-units were created within the lot occupied by Unit 5. The original area allotted to Unit 1 was split into at least two sub-units. Parts of streets and courtyards were transformed into living-areas. The *porticus*, while not an integral part of the living space, was no open public space either. Insula 2 was expanding towards the west, at the cost of the north-south-street. Insula 1 was, at

<sup>50</sup> Cf. K. BUTLER, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (London 2003) 244 with examples from Syria.

<sup>51</sup> BRUHN 2004.

<sup>52</sup> BRUHN 2004, 146 fig. 11 pl. 19d.

<sup>53</sup> BRUHN 2004, 146.

<sup>54</sup> BRUHN 2006.

<sup>55</sup> JARITZ 1998.

least in its northern and eastern parts, defined by the building of stratum G. In stratum E the casemate wall, successor of the perimeter wall and presumably still the western limit of the town in Early Ptolemaic times, was dismantled, and the settled area expanded further to the west. In stratum B-C the east-west extension of Insula 1 was 33 m<sup>56</sup>. Presumably due to an increase in population, the old limits of the town were no longer respected. The phenomenon of more and more split up lots with ever smaller living units is a frequent occurrence in Graeco-Roman Egypt<sup>57</sup>.

The development of the town quarter excavated in Area 15 started as a strictly organised compound with distinctly military aspects, it later was the location of a – presumably dynastic – monument and finally evolved into a more and more urbanised area. The east-west road was in use until the Early Islamic Period. Other areas of Syene also produced samples of domestic architecture but have yet to be studied in detail.

The excavations in Area 15 opened only a small window into the history of a small town situated far to the south of the Mediterranean world, but proved that Syene was part of this realm and subject to changes in lifestyle, evident in the more central trendsetting areas of the Hellenistic and Roman culture. The central question of appropriation, which elements of the pool of goods and ideas available were accepted and which were rejected, the degree of modifications necessary to make a foreign concept compatible, can be asked on a new and broader basis growing rapidly with each new area excavated.

A preliminary interpretation of the findings in Syene implies the conclusion that the level of Hellenisation depended on the distance from the Mediterranean shore as well as on the status of the settlement. In regard to the status, there were mostly two categories: Alexandria<sup>58</sup> and the *χώρα*, meaning the rest of Egypt. In the Delta, especially along the shores of the Mediterranean<sup>59</sup> but also further inland, some houses show a typical Hellenistic layout<sup>60</sup> with amenities like mosaic floors<sup>61</sup>. Further to the south the picture changes significantly, even taking into account that few major centres have been excavated and recorded properly (most prominently the πόλις Ptolemais Hermiou that has not been investigated archaeologically at all). Even in Roman *μετροπόλεις* classical architectural elements, seem to be restricted to public buildings while the vast majority of houses showed a purely Egyptian layout.

Applying Bourdieu's terminology, the very strong Egyptian field, firmly embedded in society long before the Macedonian conquest, was forced to certain adaptations with considerable consequences for the lifestyle, even in remote areas like the First Cataract. Probably due to the higher proportion of native Egyptians within the population, the gravity<sup>62</sup> of the local, objective structures limited the impact of foreign influence and traditional domestic patterns prevailed, at least within the archaeological record of Area 15.

<sup>56</sup> No earlier phases were discerned in Area 9 due to the difficult circumstances of the excavation.

<sup>57</sup> MAEHLER 1983, 120 f. attributes the phenomenon to inheritance. The constant splitting up of houses led to minuscule house sizes compared to the standards of the Graeco-Roman world. ALSTON 2002, 67–69. J. ROWLANDSON, Town and Country in Ptolemaic Egypt, in: A. ERSKINE (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 249–263 esp. 258 with an example from Thebes; cf. HADJI-MINAGLOU 2007, 166 f. figs. 78. 79 for a similar development in Tebtynis. While houses were rather scattered and isolated during the early Ptolemaic Period (HADJI-MINAGLOU 2007, 168), the quarter is densely clustered in the early Roman period (HADJI-MINAGLOU 2007, 170–174). Cf. B. MUHS, Fractions of Houses in Ptolemaic Hawara, in: LIPPERT – SCHENTULEIT 2008, 190 f. on Hawara with a negative assessment concerning archaeological evidence for house-splits but rich papyrological material.

<sup>58</sup> J. Y. EMPEREUR, *Alexandria Rediscovered* (London 1998) 60 f.; W. KOLATAJ – G. MAJCHEREK – E. PARANDOWSKA, Villa of the Birds. The Excavation and Preservation of the Kom al-Dikka Mosaics. ARCE Conservation Series 3 (Cairo 2007) 16–20. – MCKENZIE 2007, 179–181 on Alexandria. Peristyle houses seemed to be standard in the more prestigious parts of the capital.

<sup>59</sup> W. A. DASZEWSKI, Témoignage de l'urbanisation de la côte méditerranéenne de l'Égypte à l'époque hellénistique et romaine à la lumière des fouilles de Marina el Alamein, BSFE 132, 1995, 11–29 esp. 19 for Marina el Alamein.

<sup>60</sup> If K. MICHAŁOWSKI, Les fouilles polonaises à Tell-Atrib (Saison 1961), ASAE 58, 1964, 235–244 esp. 238–241 is correct a house with a peristyle was found even further inland, in Athribis. The evidence seems to be rather sketchy. In the corners of the courtyard columns showing a heart-shaped cross-section were used. This solution was also common in Alexandria. Columns of this kind from Aswan probably were parts of an official building; cf. JARITZ 1998, 155–157. 161 f. fig. 2d; BRUHN 2006, 262). For an example of a peristyle from Tebtynis with the typical columns in the corners cf. G. HADJI-MINAGLOU, L'habitat à Tebtynis à la lumière des fouilles récentes: I<sup>er</sup> s. av.–I<sup>er</sup> s. apr. J.-C., in: LIPPERT – SCHENTULEIT 2008, 123–133 esp. 126 f. fig. 4. It is the only example from the Fayum.

<sup>61</sup> W. A. DASZEWSKI, Corpus of Mosaics from Egypt I. Hellenistic and Early Roman Period, *Aegyptiaca Treverensia* 3 (Mainz 1985) cat. no. 38 for a high quality mosaic from Thmouis.

<sup>62</sup> J. HILLIER – E. ROOKSBY, Introduction to the First Edition, in: J. HILLIER – E. ROOKSBY (eds.), *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (Aldershot 2005) 19–42 esp. 23.

List of Bibliographical Abbreviations

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Sources of Illustrations

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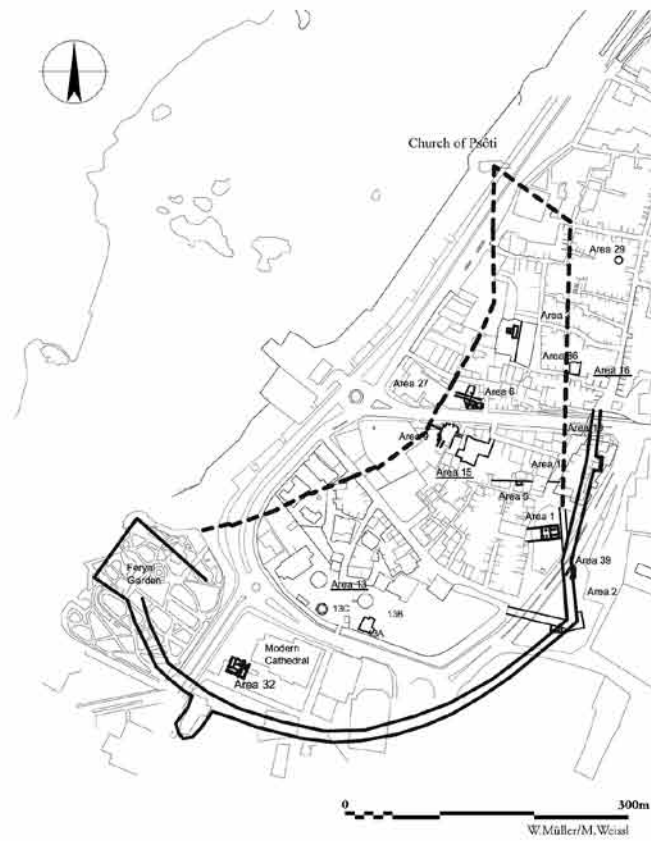


Fig.1: Syene. Map of the Graeco-Roman town



Fig. 2: Area 15. Strata J-H/2b



Fig. 3: Area 15. Houses 4 and 5



Fig. 4: Sandstone basin



Fig. 5: Building 5, Room 1

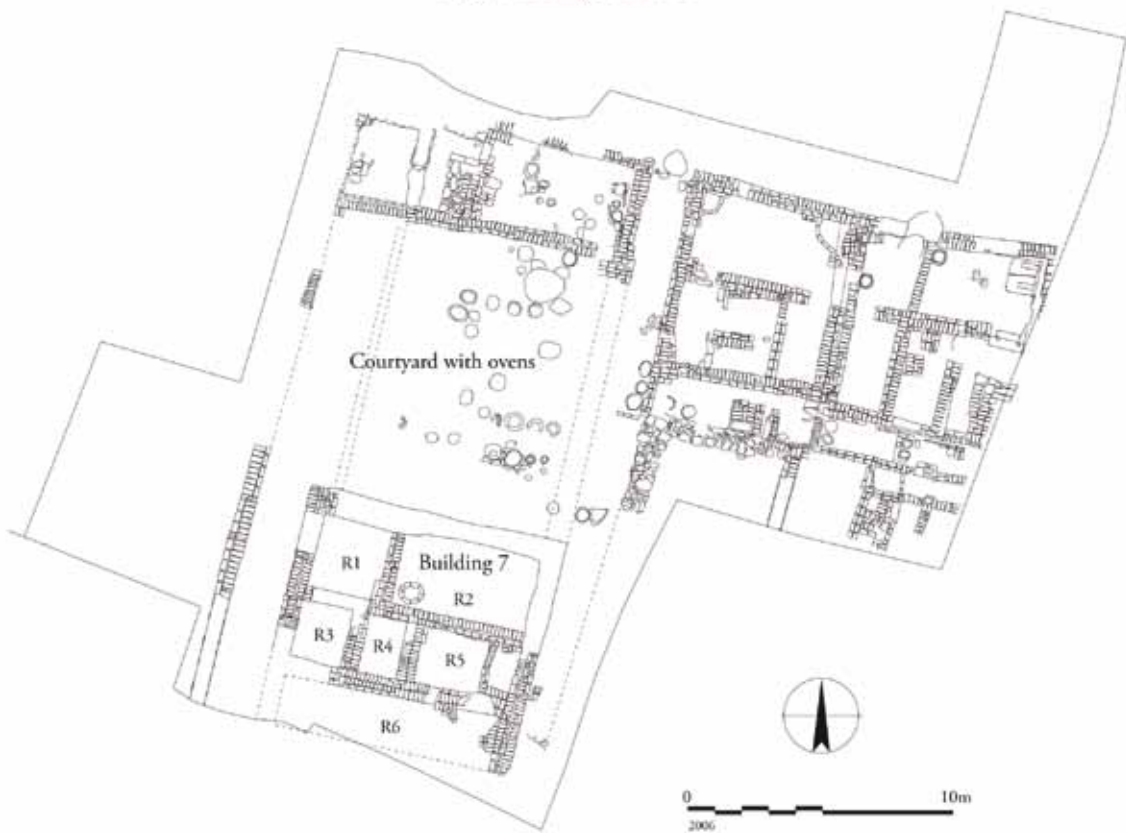


Fig. 6: Area 15. Stratum H/2a

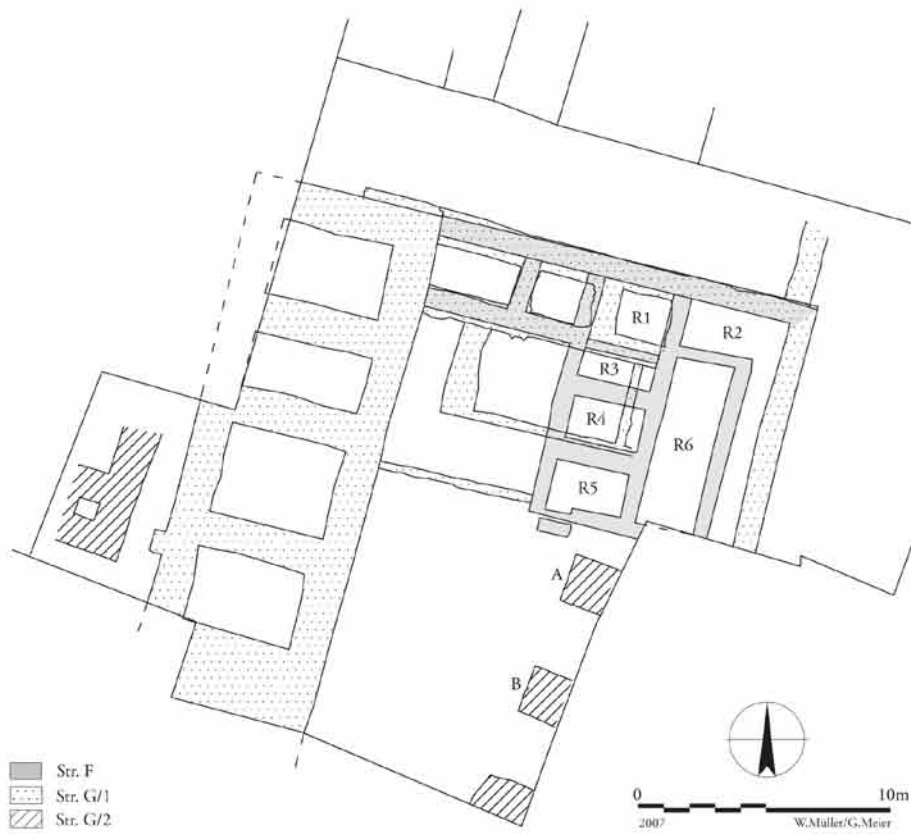


Fig. 7: Area 15. Strata F-G

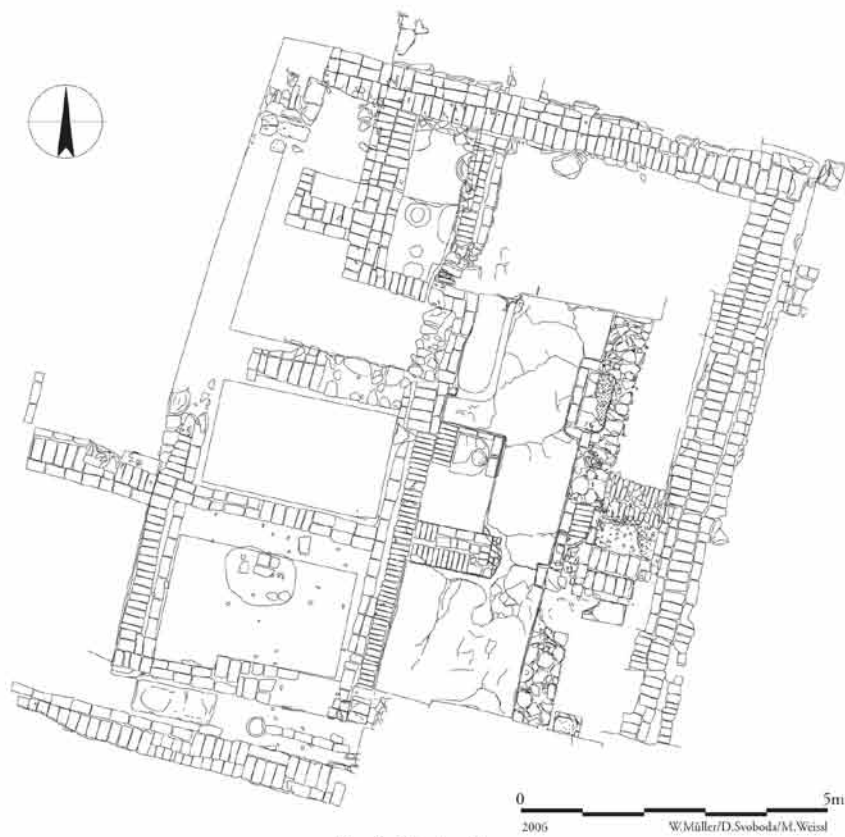


Fig. 8: The bathhouse



Fig. 9: Overview of the bathhouse



Fig. 10: Lower portions of the northern hipbath



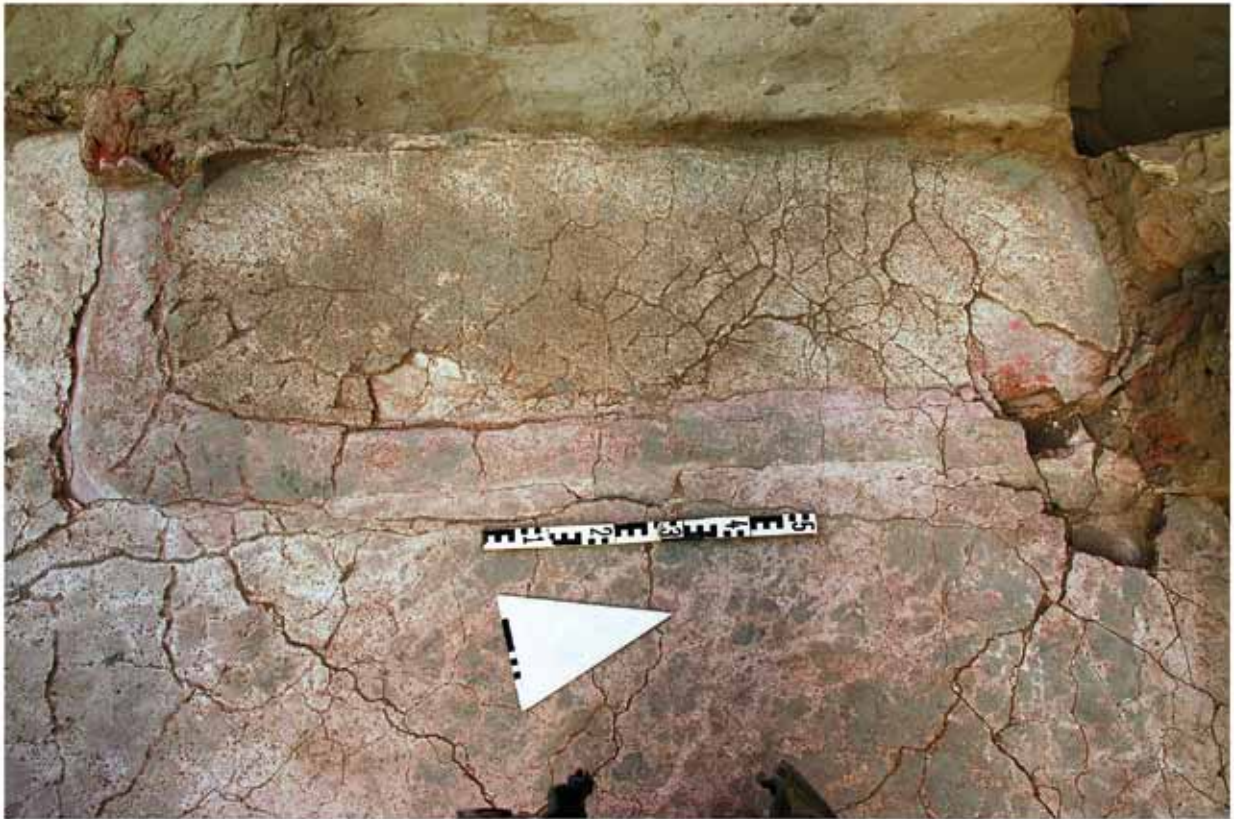


Fig. 11: Bathhouse. Imprint of the tub



Fig. 12: Bathhouse. Southern wall with entrance and pipe for water-disposal



Fig. 13: Bathhouse. Floor construction

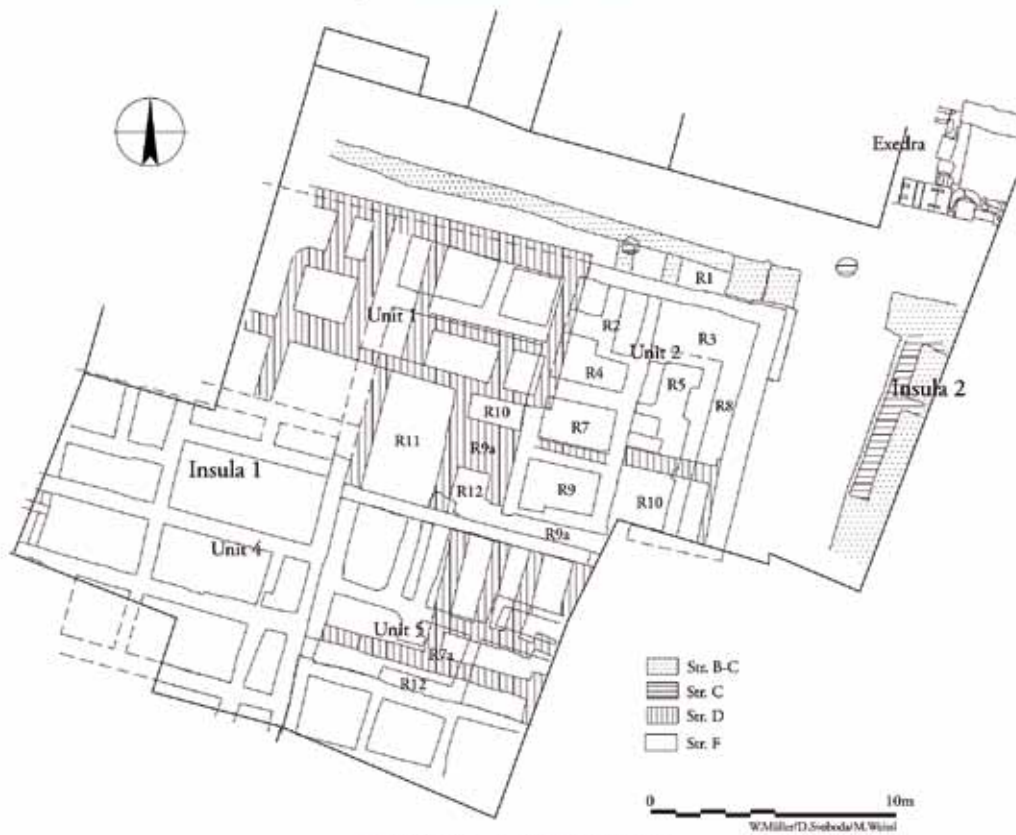


Fig. 14: Area 15. Map of Insula 1



Fig. 15: Bathhouse. Elevated threshold and staircase



Fig. 16: Unit 1/Room 9a



Fig. 17: Northern part of Insula 1



Fig. 18: Detail of Insula 1



Fig. 19: Syene. Map of the Areas