

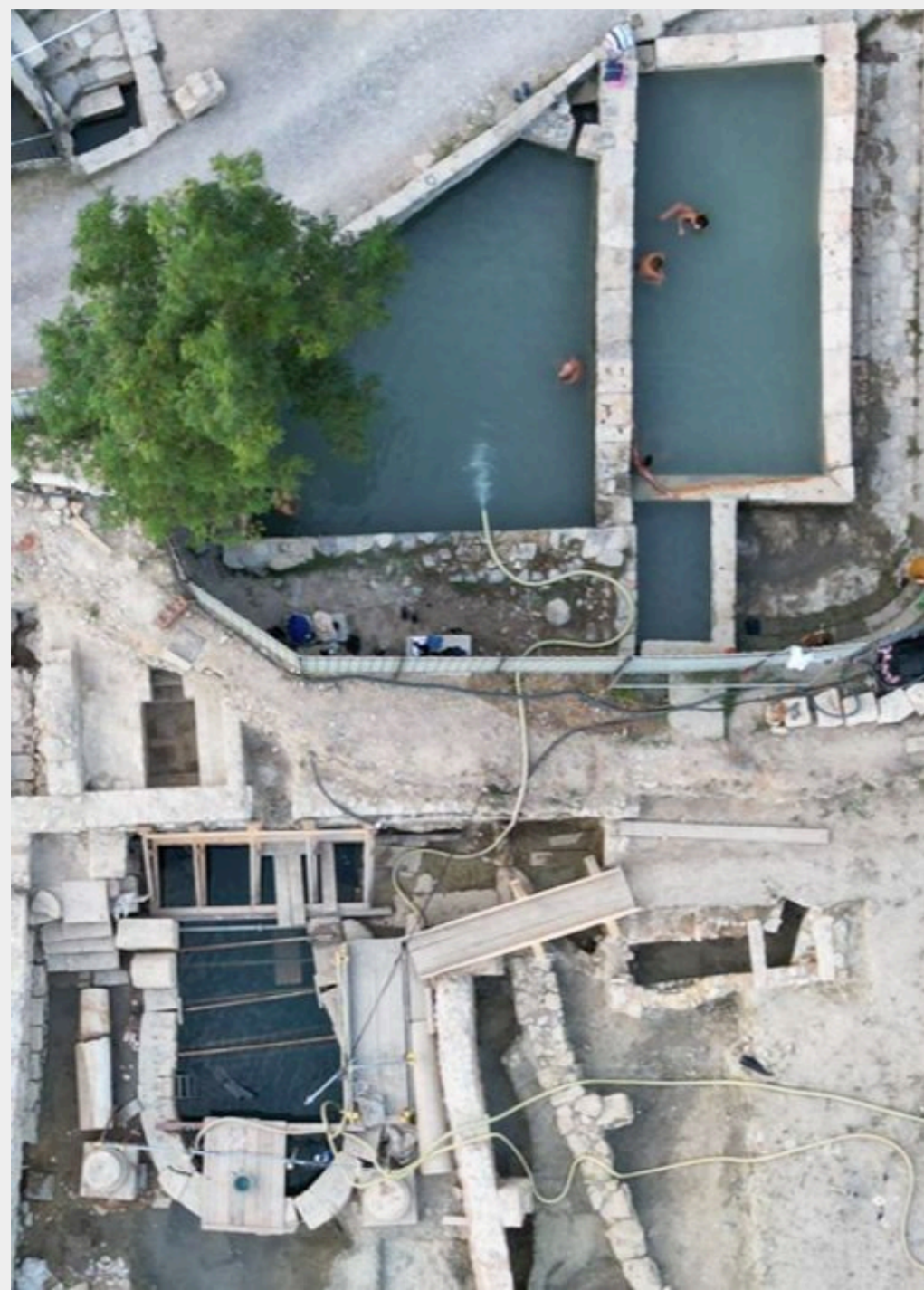


# Archaeology of Thermalism. New studies on healing waters

## Editorial of Engramma no. 214

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↓ Abstract ↓



Engramma 214 presents the results of a new season of studies focused on the archaeology of thermal sites. Our aim is to promote a polyphonic dialogue between scholars and disciplines, breaking past borders and boundaries. Although the study of ancient thermalism through the last twenty years resulted in an impressive number of monographs, edited volumes and papers published in international peer reviewed journals, we are still missing a consistent update on the various ongoing activities. Therefore, one of the goals is to ensure an annual monographic issue of Engramma dedicated to natural thermalism and in general to the topic of settlement and devotional dynamics related to water between ancient and modern times. Volumes will include the results of specific research, as well as updates on research projects, exhibitions and initiatives aimed at promoting the knowledge on the use, both ancient and contemporary, of this extraordinary natural resource.

The narrative of this first volume merges ancient votive religion with thermal medicine in context and follows a chronological and spatial order. Different papers address the preliminary results of the excavation at Bagno Grande in San Casciano dei Bagni (Italy) (Jean Turfa; Emanuele Mariotti; Edoardo Vanni; Mattia Bischeri). This case study becomes an input to revise past and forgotten excavations in Tuscany (Jacopo Tabolli, Debora Barbagli, Cesare Felici; Marco Pacifici) and to reconsider the votive role of bodies in ancient sanctuaries (Olivier de Cazanove). From Etruscan to Roman, papers discuss places, objects and written evidence (Maddalena Bassani), with a focus on the Euganean area both under the perspective of archaeologists and architects (Maddalena Bassani, Maria Elena De Venanzi) and biologists and medical doctors (Fabrizio Caldara, Antonio Chiappetta, Pietro Scimemi). The article by Silvia González-Soutelo and Laura García-Juan proposes a broad methodological approach to the study of thermo-mineral sites between Antiquity and the present day. In this paper future research developed by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid is outlined. Back to San Casciano dei Bagni, the last part of the volume presents the encountering of the thermo-mineral spring of Bagno Grande in the design of the exhibition at the Archaeological National Museum of Naples (Massimo Osanna, Jacopo Tabolli).

From a methodological point of view and integrated approaches to the study and analysis of the thermal phenomenon through the centuries, this special issue was inspired by the three-day workshop that took place on 25-27 September 2023 in Siena, Chianciano Terme and San Casciano dei Bagni, entitled "Etruscologia\_Medicina\_Terme". This workshop was intended to create a platform of dialogue between archaeology and thermal medicine, as well as among Academic Institutions (University for Foreigners of Siena), Authority for Archaeology (Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the provinces of Siena, Grosseto and Arezzo), Municipalities (Siena, Chianciano Terme, San Casciano dei Bagni), National Groups (Italian Federation of Spas, Federterme), and Private Associations (Fonteverde Lifestyle and Thermal Retreat and Ebiterme - National Bilateral Body of Spas). Moving beyond the recent archaeological discoveries in the area of Siena, where numerous ancient places of worship have been identified close to the thermal-mineral springs since the Etruscan era, which were also and above all places of medical care and practice, international scholars have presented the results of their research to current medical doctors who are active in the area. The scientific programme promoted by the University for Foreigners of Siena (Unistras) has granted funding from the PNRR project "THE - Tuscany Health Ecosystem" Spoke 5: Implementing innovation for healthcare and well-being".

The theme of wellbeing and healing can be primarily physical but can also extend to the spiritual dimension, as it is in fact one of the most significant aspects of the relationship that mankind entered into with water. Water was certainly necessary for daily life and had to be therefore easily available (fountains and public baths were some of the most significant hallmarks of Greek and Roman architecture), but especially when characterised by specific properties, such as curative ones, it had to be reached through long journeys and wanderings. Some of these aspects constituted the core of issue 204 of Engramma in 2023, and from reading the contributions in the new issue of this journal it is possible to foreshadow further areas of investigation for future research. Among these, the practical management of water in public and private contexts appears one of the most important aspects, i.e. the ways in which water use is ensured for sanitary, utilitarian or recreational purposes. Furthermore, it will be interesting to focus on the access routes to the curative springs along secondary routes to the main routes, which remained in use from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and often still in Modern times, to meet the needs of pilgrims and the sick who undertook long or very long journeys of hope, leaving traces of their devotion once they reached their destination. Finally, the study of the settlements around the curative springs will enable us to deepen our knowledge both on strictly medical and therapeutic aspects, also thanks to a comparison between contexts that differ in time and space, and on non-curative aspects, such as the multiplication of productive activities at the service of spa-users throughout the centuries.

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keywords | Thermalism; San Casciano dei Bagni; Montegrotto Terme; Ancient and Modern medicine; Greek and Roman architecture.

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