

Noël Grisanti
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AIA Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship 2016
American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project

This summer, thanks to the generosity of the Jane C. Waldbaum Field School Scholarship, I was able to spend 6-weeks excavating at Morgantina, a Hellenistic site located in central Sicily. Although I have long loved and studied Greek and Latin literature, archaeology was entirely new to me and by the end of my time in Sicily I was thoroughly captivated by life in the field. Through the support of Professor Waldbaum and the AIA, I learned new skills, developed lasting relationships and ultimately discovered a passion that I believe will influence my future far beyond summer 2016.

The site of all these discoveries was Morgantina, specifically with the American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project (AEM: CAP), headed fearlessly by Dr. Alex Walthall (University of Texas, Austin). Morgantina has been a site of active excavation since the 1950s. The ancient site shows evidence of occupation dating back to the early Bronze Age, and important Iron Age settlements exist on an area of the site known as the Cittadella. Evidence of Greek influence dates to the mid 6th century BCE, and the site was also the location of an attempt by the Sikel leader Duketios to free Sicily from Greek control in the 459 BCE. Morgantina's greatest period of prosperity was in the 3rd century BCE, as an outpost of the Hellenistic kingdom of Heiron II of Syracuse, and it was during this period that our excavations were focused.

Our work in 2016 centered on a structure in the Contrada Agnese, an area at the west edge of the city. Based on the results of geophysical surveys and finds of the last four years, trenches 42, 43, 44 and 45 were laid (the former three operated all season and the

latter was primarily for exploration) to the south of the North Baths. I worked in trench 44 under the supervision of Ben Crowther (University of Texas, Austin) and Andrea Samz-Puztol (Bryn Mawr University). Our trench was focused on exploring a single room that had been partially discovered during the 2015 excavations, to determine its interior and exterior components and to develop phases of its occupation.

The typical workday began bright and early, with breakfast in the dig house at 6:30 and arrival on site before 7. Work on site consisted of digging, articulating walls, sifting buckets and whatever other tasks needed to be done at a given time (anything from weighing tiles to labeling finds to taking pictures of our adorable site puppy). At 10:00 AM we took a cookie break, a vital time to boost our blood sugar levels as well as to discuss our work and the goals for the rest of the day. Two more hours of work ensued until lunch, lovingly prepared by two fixers (volunteers who spent the morning in town, getting our lunches and dinners ready), and a chance to cool down under some shade. After lunch we washed pottery for an hour with our trenches, a time that was equal parts frustrating (Morgantina dirt is notoriously hard to remove) and reinvigorating, as we bonded with our trenchmates and enjoyed a brief break from the Sicilian sun. After pottery washing, work continued for a final three hours until 5:00, at which time we would clean up our tools and head back to Aidone, the small town in which we lived, for some rest until dinner.



Hard at work: a snapshot of our team in action, featuring digging, articulating and sweeping



My assistant trench supervisor, Andrea, demonstrating her skill with a big pick



Our site, nestled in the dry Sicilian countryside



Washing pottery: a task both invigorating and infuriating



Starting our day by articulating walls at 7 AM



Trench 44 team, sitting in our beloved trench

The most defining feature of my time at Morgantina, more than any single job that I performed, was the sense of community and care that existed among the entire team, volunteers and leadership alike. The environment was one of constant encouragement, and even as someone who had never excavated before I felt like an important member of the team. I could ask questions, develop ideas and never felt inferior or insignificant. We joked about our trench “family,” but by the end of 6 weeks I did feel a familial bond with these people I spent hours with every day. I made friendships with people who share my passions and my goals, and found infinite resources and support as I begin what I hope will be a long, fruitful career in archaeology. I am so grateful to Professor Jane Waldbaum and to the AIA for enabling me to spend a truly life-changing summer in a life-changing place. I would also like to thank my whole Morgantina family, including Dr. Alex Walthall, Dr. Jared Benton, Dr. Randall Souza, Leigh Leiberman and so many others, who have inspired and encouraged me this summer and beyond.



The AEM:CAP 2016 Team showing our true colors. We live for the dig!