

American Institute of Archaeology Field School Report

Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeology Field School Scholarship

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8 August 2013

The day began with roosters crowing and an alarm clock pounding my eardrums. It was difficult at first to adjust to the ten-hour time change, but my body quickly adjusted to waking up at dawn, eating breakfast, and catching a bus to the work site. This past July, I had the amazing opportunity to work with Balkan Heritage Field School in the ancient country of Bulgaria.

As a student of the University of Idaho, I have limited exposure to classical archaeology. The classics department was shut down a couple of years ago and the focus is now on historical archaeology or post contact archaeology. This, however, did not dampen my desire to experience classical archaeology. Since I was in the eighth grade I have loved history. By the time I was in high school I had decided that I wanted to study the artifacts left behind by our ancestors, and by the time I got into college I had decided to focus on the classics because it was my favorite era of history.

However, I had never dreamed that I would have the opportunity to travel to Europe and work on a classical site due to the expenses involved. One of my professors talked me into checking out the American Institute of Archaeology website. I brought up the page with a world map showing all of the field schools - and I was blown away. I instantly started checking all of them out. At this point I was still nervous about the cost, but a fire had been lit. After I narrowed my attention to a single school I discovered the Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship and decided to apply, both for field school and the

scholarship.

I worked on a project called *Ancient Greeks in the Land of Dionysos* - Excavation of Emporion Pistiros, Thrace. It is a classical Hellenistic site dating between the 5th and 3rd c. B.C.E. It is located in southern Bulgaria just outside the town of Septembvre. It seems to be a location where Greek merchants traded with the Odrussian kingdom of Thrace. This site witnessed the conquest by Philip II who left the site as an important metal extraction location on the banks of the Hebros River. In antiquity the river was much larger and more navigable than it is today. There is evidence that the river, through time, destroyed part of the site, but today it is not much more than a canal. There was a fortification wall around the city that measured about 300 by 400 meters square. The site itself was only discovered after an inscription was found in a farmer's field not far from the site at what was once a Roman road. The inscription discusses the founding of the city and the only documented mention of the Thracian royal court.

As with usual archaeological sites the area has been divided into a 10 meter by 10 meter square grid. I was given the task of opening a new unit from the very beginning. I was working in square B'# (south). The northern section had already been excavated. My group made a 4 m x 4 m square, working around some lightning ground rods. The first task was to cut the grass and then dispatch the first 10cm 'modern' layer. Then it was time to begin excavating in layers. I was taught how to use all of the tools involved - including the brutal pickax and the delicate trowel. I was also able to do all of the processes including digging, shifting, cleaning, sorting, taking elevations, and drawing.

This field school is organized for beginners such as myself, to learn the art of archaeology as well as the background methodology and philosophy. We worked in the

field in the morning from about 7:30 to 1:00. Before we started work each day we had a lecture on excavating techniques, surveying, dating, and several other topics. In the afternoons we had lectures or workshops that covered everything from the history of the site, archeobotany, pottery restoration and conservation, documentation, and artifact analysis. It was great to be able to see all of these things and perform all of the functions rather than just hearing about them. On our single day off each week we were also taken to other archaeological sites such as Thracian tombs and the ruins of theaters in the city of Plovdiv. It was a great atmosphere to ask questions, and receive encompassing answers, which made the whole experience great.

Overall this experience has had a major impact on me both academically and personally. I believe that I have learned so much over the course of four weeks. This is knowledge that I can also share with other students at my home institution. This was hands-on knowledge that was previously unavailable to me. Personally, my passion for classical archaeology has just grown through this experience and I am planning on applying to graduate programs to pursue this interest. This amazing experience would not have been possible without the financial support I received through the Jane C. Waldbaum scholarship - which I used to help pay for my tuition. This was a highlight in my academic career and has pushed me to go for my dream.



Photograph 1: This is an evolution of the unit that I worked on B'3 (south). The first step was to cut the grass. Then we excavated a 10cm modern level. We went down another level and then worked on a trench along the northern profile. Toward the end we worked on evening the levels. Evolution follows from right to left on the top row then down to the second row.



Photograph 2: Some of our finds over the course of a month. Left is two pieces of red figure pottery and the right is a bronze coin, possibly an Alexander the Great coin.



Photograph 3: A pile of different vessels found in my unit.



Photograph 4: A Thracian tomb about 5 km from the site.



Photograph 5: Overlooking the town of Varvara, Bulgaria where we stayed.



Photograph 6: My awesome team.