

This past summer season, I had the incredible opportunity of attending an archaeological field school in Sicily for four weeks. Morgantina is an ancient Greek site located in central Sicily that existed from the Bronze Age up until the first century BCE. It is best known throughout scholarship for its city planning and numismatics. I can attest that the size of Morgantina and its surrounding landscape would leave any history fan in awe. Upon arriving in Sicily, other program attendees and I bused to Aidone, the small and quiet town we stayed in during our season. One can sense the strong connection that the Aidonese feel



*Me on my 22nd birthday breaking soil for our next pass into some topsoil.*

towards the closely located site of Morgantina by the many street signs and flyers hanging around the town with images of the beautiful limestone statue named the Goddess of Morgantina.

The entire site was vast and the agora valley, nestled between the two ends, made our ten-meter-long trenches feel comparably small. There were three trenches and the trench I was assigned to was supervised by the wonderful Andrea Samz-Pustol of Bryn Mawr College and the University of Wisconsin. Under Andrea's guidance, I gained important experiences and skills in field techniques required of aspiring archaeologists. The area of the agora that we were working on had been briefly excavated in the sixties but were abandoned by the archaeologists at the time in pursuit of other project interests. This season was about picking up where they left off, which meant digging through heaps of topsoil and modern debris. Just when we

would think we had hit a cultural layer, some scrap of modern trash would remind us to keep digging lower. A large portion of our trench was also covered in various sized rocks that made digging down evenly difficult. To make matters worse, a heat wave that had been warned by the Italian government and appropriately named Cerberus was about to reach

southern Italy. Despite the sweltering heat and rocky terrain, working in Morgantina was an experience that I will forever cherish. I made so many new friends and was able to gain incredibly valuable skills working on site. We had the opportunity to shadow the people working at the museum, dig house, and school (where the laboratories were) to see how the environmental, conservation, pottery, and finds team operated once the objects were excavated. As a student pursuing specialization in archaeobotany, working with the environmental team and learning how to set up and perform floatation was thrilling.

Prior to the field school, I had taken courses on archaeological field and lab techniques that were intended to



*Switching to a small hand pickax to do some more refined detail as we began exposing the threshold between the room behind me to the area in front of me.*



*Another volunteer and I enjoying some respite from the cool water of the floatation tank.*

teach students excavation and laboratory skills. I feel that the knowledge and experience I received at Morgantina is something that could never be taught in a course such as the one I had enrolled in during my junior year.

Through my four weeks in Italy, I became comfortable differentiating between rock and pottery (a surprisingly difficult task), learning that there is ironically a way to be gentle with a pickax, that plant roots are my mortal enemy, and that “trowel hand” is a silent killer. In addition to spending my summer in Sicily, I was able to celebrate my 22nd birthday and my family’s homeland. While in Sicily, I had the opportunity to visit close to Palermo for the weekend, which is

the city my mother's family immigrated from as well as Corleone. I was even able to give the locals some entertainment as I tried practicing some of the Italian, I gained in my Italian Studies minor. Regardless, the locals were so welcoming and encouraging of us all in engaging with the Italian language and customs.

Overall, I'd say that my experience at Morgantina was spectacular, and I am sincerely grateful for the Archaeological Institute of America's award of the Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship, which made this opportunity financially accessible for me. Morgantina offers its students a one-of-a-kind opportunity to engage with the local community, make new friends, experience a new culture, and be a part of such important role within uncovering and preserving ancient history.



*Another volunteer, an Italian farmer employed by the project, and me posing with one of the hundreds of worms we found in our trench.*