

Waldbaum Scholarship Report

I used the Waldbaum Scholarship to help pay for a large portion of my tuition to work on the Cosa excavations in Italy for all of June 2022. It was a greatly enriching experience, and I am grateful for the assistance provided by the AIA with this scholarship. Cosa is an Ancient Roman colony situated in southwestern Tuscany, founded in 273 BCE. Excavations for academic publication started in 1948, and the current round of excavations is focused on the small colony's bath complex, investigating in particular the mechanisms by which water was provided for the bath, as Cosa is situated on top of a large, steep hill, surrounded by salt water.

For the first week of my time at Cosa, I helped begin excavation in a trench where the partial goal was to ascertain the exact position of a street running alongside the bath, which had been marked on earlier maps but had not yet been located during this round of excavations. I learned how to properly sift soil for artifacts and quickly differentiate between potential pottery sherds and chips of rock or ceramic building material (CBM). We each got to try our hand at using pickaxes to quickly break up the extremely rocky first layers of the trench. I also worked at cleaning off and defining large chunks of fallen vaulting at one end of the trench.

After the first week, I transitioned into interning in the finds lab, where all materials found in the trenches are cleaned, identified, recorded in detail, and stored. This was a hugely educational experience for me, particularly in the realm of pottery. The staff of the finds lab taught me all of the major categories of pottery most commonly found at Cosa. I learned to differentiate between coarse ware and fine ware, and within these major classes, to identify cookware, African cookware, terra sigillata, African red gloss fine ware, black gloss fine ware, and more. Within these categories, I learned how to identify specific subclasses, such as Campana A, B, or C of black gloss fine ware, by observing the color of the fabric and the

perceivable mineral composition, and to identify which parts of a vessel pieces were, if possible. Along with learning how to sort out pottery, I learned how to identify the subtle coloring of marble and tesserae, to detect the faint remaining pigments on painted plaster, to sort out types of animal bones (mandibles, teeth, tusks, claws, toe bones, tortoise shells, and more!), to differentiate between modern and ancient glass of windows and vessels, to figure out the significance and function of large chunks of CBM, and to determine the base material of extremely degraded ancient metals.

Most importantly, I learned in the finds lab the significance of proper documentation of archaeological finds. As soon as finds leave the trenches and come down to the finds lab, it is of the utmost importance that we document exactly where they came from – which trench and which stratigraphic unit (SU), and, with particularly special finds, exactly which coordinates in the trench. If finds from different SUs are mixed or details of location are not recorded, these important materials lose a major part of their meaning and significance for research, and in turn, SUs and trenches lose valuable evidence that could have been used to apply an approximate date to a layer. Within the finds lab, it is also important to pay attention to detail when recording details, labeling, counting, weighing, and storing materials. Cosa routinely has specialists in various fields come during excavation for only a couple of days at a time, and it is very important that researchers who can lend more meaning to certain items are able to quickly and confidently retrieve the materials that they need. As of recently, the data recorded on paper in the field is also being digitized into a more accessible database form, which I have been assisting with for the past two years, and continued assisting with during my month in the field.

Overall, my month in Cosa was a very important experience in my development as a student, and it would have been far more difficult for me to have accessed this project without

the help of the AIA's Waldbaum Scholarship. I am so deeply appreciative, and will carry the knowledge gained on this project with me into my future educational endeavors and career path.

Thank you.



The view from the Arx at Cosa.



The Capitulum on the Arx at Cosa.



Me on the Arx at Cosa.



Me counting piles of coarse ware from a single SU on our final day of work.



My fellow finds lab intern with the completed bag of coarse ware from that SU – over 600 sherds!