

REPORT FROM THE FIELD: CONTRADA AGNESE PROJECT (CAP) 2014

The American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project (AEM: CAP) is a multi-year excavation and research project, sponsored by Princeton University. Our investigations focus on occupation at the far western edge of the ancient city in order to better understand the lives of those who dwelled on the margins of Hellenistic and Roman Morgantina (Figure 1). CAP's 2014 season was a great success, thanks to the hard work and commitment of the exceptional group of thirty-one students and scholars, who joined our team from three countries and more than fifteen universities and institutions.

We laid the groundwork for 2014 during the 2013 season, when members of CAP carried out excavations in various parts of the ancient city to test the interpretations produced by the 2012 geophysical survey. CAP field teams opened two trenches (VI.34 and VI.35) along the eastern side of *insula* W13/14S in a portion of the block that corresponds to the hypothetical division between Lots 8 and 10 (Figure 2). Among the most significant results of our 2013 excavations was the confirmation that ancient builders at Morgantina altered the orientation of the original city plan to accommodate the Agnese Ridge, which runs at an intersecting path with the original orthogonal city plan.

We see this in the different orientation of the *insula* and the adjacent *stenopos* W13 (Figure 3). For more information on the CAP 2013 season, please see our preliminary report published with the journal *Fasti On Line Documents & Research*.

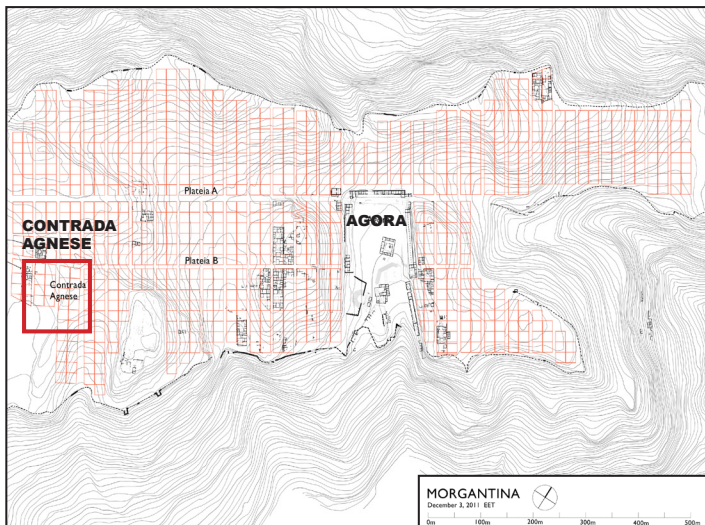


Figure 1: Plan of Morgantina (Serra Orlando) showing location of the Contrada Agnese.

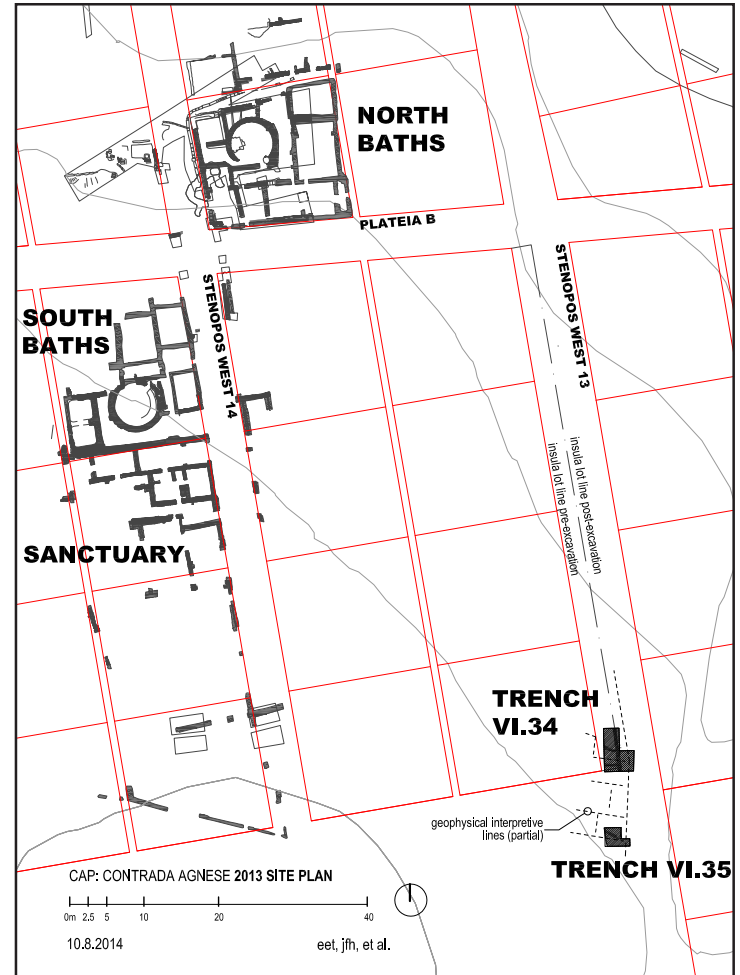
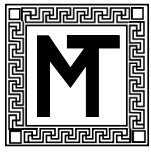


Figure 2: Plan of Contrada Agnese showing locations of 2013 trenches.



Figure 3: CAP 2013 trenches in the Contrada Agnese with projected deviation of *stenopos* W13.



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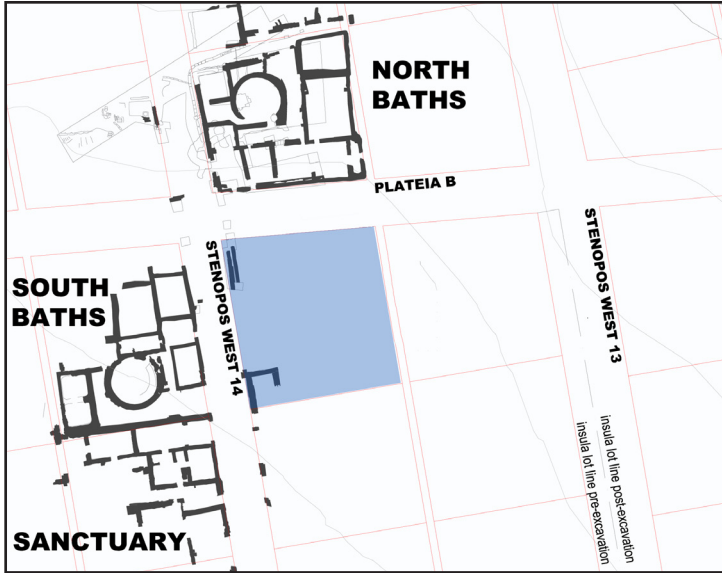


Figure 4: Plan of Contrada Agnese showing location of Lot 1 within insula W13/14S.

Perhaps the most significant of the many exciting discoveries of the season was a wall constructed over the top of the third-century BCE building that once occupied Lot 1. The wall is well dated to the early second century BCE by the material recovered from the stratum below, a thick leveling fill containing an abundance of ceramic vessels, coins, and terracotta figurines. (Figure 7). As such, it provides clear evidence for renewed activity in the Contrada Agnese after the Roman sack of the city in 211 BCE, a period in the city's history that remains relatively obscure and one in which it was previously thought that the area of the Contrada Agnese was largely abandoned. We expect to have a better understanding of the space as our research and excavations continue over the coming years.

Please stay tuned!



Figure 6: Andrew Tharler (Bryn Mawr), carefully excavates a *pithos* discovered in the southeast corner of trench VI.36.

Our excavations in 2014 focused on the northeastern lot (Lot 1) of the insula W13/14S (Figure 4). In three trenches, we exposed several rooms of a very large, and possibly public, building that stood immediately to the south of plateia B, across the avenue from the North Baths (Figure 5). The discovery of large storage vessels (*pithoi*) within our largest trench suggests the building was used, at least for a time, for storage of foodstuffs or agricultural goods (Figure 6).

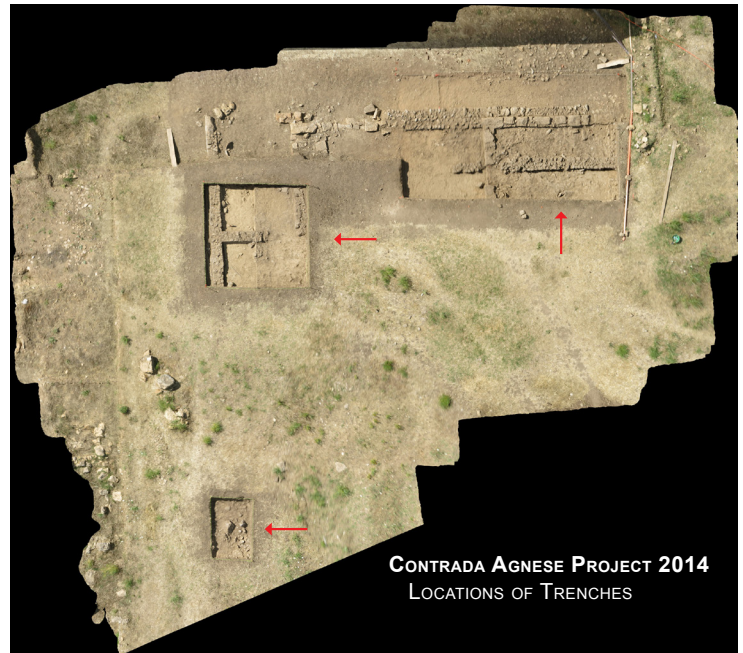
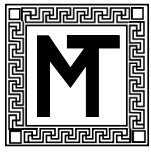


Figure 5: Aerial photograph of Lot 1, indicating the locations of CAP 2014 trenches.



Figure 7: Auschere Caufield (UOregon), skillfully excavates an important leveling fill in trench VI.36.



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Hand-in-hand with our excavations, CAP members took recording methods to a new level by incorporating cutting-edge technologies into our daily routines. In the field, we were joined by Tina, a friendly drone, who gracefully soared overhead and furnished us with daily high-resolution digital images of our trenches and of the surrounding landscape (*Figure 8*)...plus some great group shots!

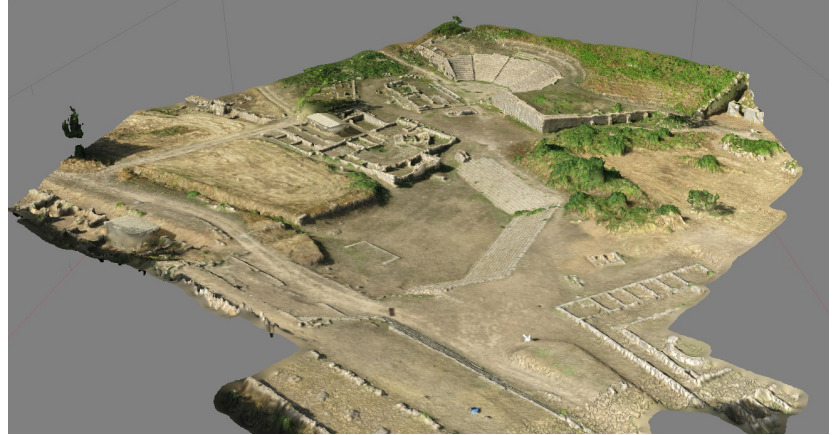


Figure 9: Partial 3D photogrammatic model of the lower agora, produced by CAP members using Agisoft PhotoScan.

Figure 8: Two aerial photos snapped by Tina during a flight over the agora.

Back in town, our Geospatial, Data Curation, and Finds Teams integrated thousands of contextual, scientific, material, and visual data points into CAP databases, allowing us to nimbly track the progress of our research as well as to render out fieldwork in visually stunning three dimensional models (*Figures 9 + 10*).

The CAP Environmental Team, comprised of specialists trained in the recovery and analysis of ancient flora and fauna, made sure that our investigations were focused on the microscopic as well as monumental. Their contributions add vibrant detail to our picture of daily life at Morgantina and its environs. (*Figure 11*).



Figure 10:
CAP members meet in the geospatial lab to discuss methods for using high-tech data management tools.



Figure 11:
CAP members work with the Environmental Team to process soil samples at the East Hill magazzino.



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Before signing off, I want to thank the Friends of Morgantina and the Department of Art & Archaeology at Princeton University for their generous support, which has continued to make our fieldwork and research possible and, most importantly, allowed us to continue to provide opportunities and training for a new generation of classical archaeologists!

Yours faithfully,

Alex Walthall
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Project Director
Contrada Agnese Project (CAP)



CAP 2014 TEAM ROSTER

Field Supervisors: Randy Souza (*Duquesne University*) + Jared Benton (*Old Dominion University*)

Trench Supervisor: Steve Gavel

Assistant Supervisors: Elizabeth Wueste (*Berkeley*) + Giuseppe Castellano (*UT Austin*)

Architecture Team: James F. Huemoeller + Giancarlo Filantropi

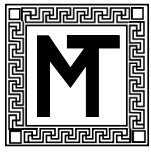
Data Curation + Finds Team: Leigh Lieberman (*Princeton*), Annie Truetzel (*Princeton*), + Mali Skotheim (*Princeton*)

Geospatial Team: Ben Gorham (*UVA*), David Massey (*Indiana*), + Alex DeLand (*AerialVector*)

Environmental Team: Michael MacKinnon (*UWinnipeg*), Robyn Veal (*Cambridge*), Cynthia Larbey (*Cambridge*),
Charlene Murphey (*UCL*), + Diane Lister (*Cambridge*)

Conservators: Karen Abend + Aislinn Smalling (*UCL*)

Volunteers: George Barr (*UOregon*), Auschere Caufield (*UOregon*), Liam Dearing (*VCU*), Ryan Franklin (*Johns Hopkins*),
Kyle Govan (*UOregon*), Luke Hollis (*Archimedes Web Solutions*), Chris Jelen (*UOregon*), Jasmine Kim (*UOregon*),
Jennifer Knust (*BU*), Kat Potts-Dupre Huemoeller (*Princeton*), Lauren Russo, Savannah Schultz (*UOregon*),
Veronica Shi (*Stanford*), Andrew Tharler (*Bryn Mawr*), Leonid Tsvetkov (*Artist at-large*), Jessica Williams
(*Harvard*)



REPORTS FROM CAP 2014 TEAM MEMBERS: CONTRADA AGNESE PROJECT (CAP) 2014

Report from Annie Truetzel

Ph.D Candidate (Princeton)

CAP Finds Team: 2013, 2014

I first became involved with CAP in 2013, hoping to deepen my understanding of archaeological fieldwork as part of my development as an ancient historian. I had no idea just how rewarding an experience it would be! I've been encouraged to take on more responsibility than I could have imagined in several exciting areas. Our Finds Team has worked together to develop a streamlined finds-processing system, so that all project teams can have almost immediate access to information on the objects discovered in the field. This experience has helped me better understand how the activities undertaken by various project teams fit together. But most importantly, I've had the opportunity to join the CAP family. I feel so fortunate to be part of this community, which is not only talented and hardworking but also collaborative, supportive and incredibly fun.



Report from Robert "Ben" Gorham

Ph.D. Candidate (UVA)

CAP Geospatial Team: 2013, 2014

The CAP 2014 field season marked an exciting and challenging new chapter in our team's excavations. Our intrepid excavation volunteers teamed up with the Geospatial Team in the computer lab to learn all the best methods for using high-tech data management tools (total stations, UAV drones, and 3D modeling) to revolutionize the way AEM: CAP produces our data. Our drone, Tina, launched her maiden flight this summer (and then dozens more!) to capture high-res aerial images of the excavations as they were underway. Learning to use photogrammetry software has allowed us to employ these images to create beautifully detailed 3D models of the trenches themselves, resulting in a daily 3D catalogue of our progress in the field. These exciting steps are only the first in what we expect will be a long list of future innovations and discoveries.

Report from Jasmine Akiyama-Kim

Undergraduate Senior (UOregon)

CAP Volunteer: 2013, 2014

The first time I heard the name was in February 2013, when Dr. Alex Walthall presented his research at my university. Only five months later, I found myself in the Contrada Agnese—trowel in hand, drenched by sun, and freckled with dirt. In the field, I worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the other students, who had come from universities across the US, as we excavated the walls of an ancient building. After the workday, Aidone welcomed us with its worn and textured cobblestone streets, bar counters teeming with delicious sweets, and a majestic view of Mt. Etna. My experience working with the Contrada Agnese Project for the past two summers has inspired me to continue my on-site education in Italy with the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome. I even had the chance to visit Morgantina this Fall with my fellow *Centrist*!





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Report from Chris Jelen

M.A. Candidate (UOregon)

CAP Volunteer: 2014

The American Excavations at Morgantina gave me the incredible opportunity to experience the material culture of the classical world in a new and exciting way. As a graduate student focusing on ancient languages, it can be easy to lose sight of the realia of the ancient world. This summer I had the chance not only to see these objects in person, but also to interact with them. It is one thing to experience the classical world through texts, but it is quite another to hold it in your hands. Above all, participating on the Contrada Agnese Project allowed me to be part of an remarkable community of scholars and archaeologists. Having the opportunity to be part of this community has not only encouraged me in my academic pursuits, but it has also lead to many lasting friendships. It is certainly an experience I will never forget.



Report from Leigh Anne Lieberman

Ph.D Candidate (Princeton)

CAP Data Curation Team: 2012-2014

Since joining the CAP Team in 2012, my primary goal has been the development and implementation of a relational database that can be link data produced by all branches of the CAP project. As all of our branches move to adopt advanced digital recording technologies during the season, our database will continue to evolve, and I am excited to help facilitate the digital organization of data. Most importantly, I am grateful for the many new colleagues and friends I have met through working at Morgantina, and especially for our marathon-length meetings to discuss excavation methodology and recording practices. These conversations fuel my passion for fieldwork. I look forward to many more in the future!