



REPORT FROM THE FIELD: CONTRADA AGNESE PROJECT (CAP) 2015



This year marked the third season of the American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project (CAP), a multi-year excavation and research project sponsored by Princeton University. Our investigations aim to shed light on the lives of those who dwelled on the margins of ancient Morgantina (*Figure 1*). The 2015 CAP season was a resounding success, thanks in no small part to the hard work and enthusiasm of the exceptional group of forty-three students and scholars who joined our team from over a dozen universities and institutions. Eight volunteers joined us this summer to take part in their *first* archaeological excavation. Bravi!

The CAP excavations are currently focused on one city block (insula W13/14S) in the Contrada Agnese zone (*Figure 2*). Excavations in the first two years of the project (2013-2014) exposed several rooms in two residential lots, revealing details of their construction and evidence for ancient diet (archaeobotanical remains cooking installations), household economies (storage vessels, coins, weights), and textile production (loom weights, bronze needles).

The focus of the 2015 CAP season was the so-called Southeast Building (21.0m x 18.75m), which occupies one residential lot (Lot 1) of the insula. Portions of the Southeast Building were first exposed in 2004 by the American Excavations at Morgantina and again by CAP in 2014. Given the building's excellent state of preservation, it is an ideal location to pursue CAP's research objective of identifying points of continuity and transformation in the city's social and economic fabric during the Hellenistic and Roman Republican periods. Over the past three years, we have also found it to be an ideal location to train students in various aspects of archaeological fieldwork, including stratigraphic excavation, analysis of environmental materials, digital documentation, and geospatial recording.

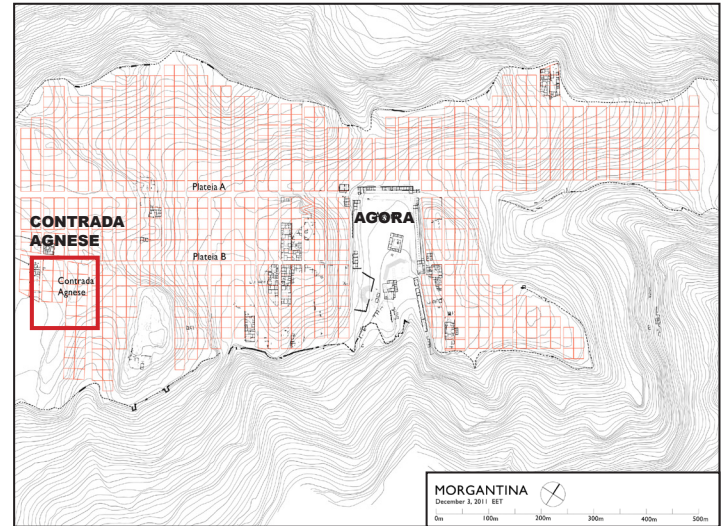


Figure 1: Plan of Morgantina (Serra Orlando) showing the location of the Contrada Agnese.

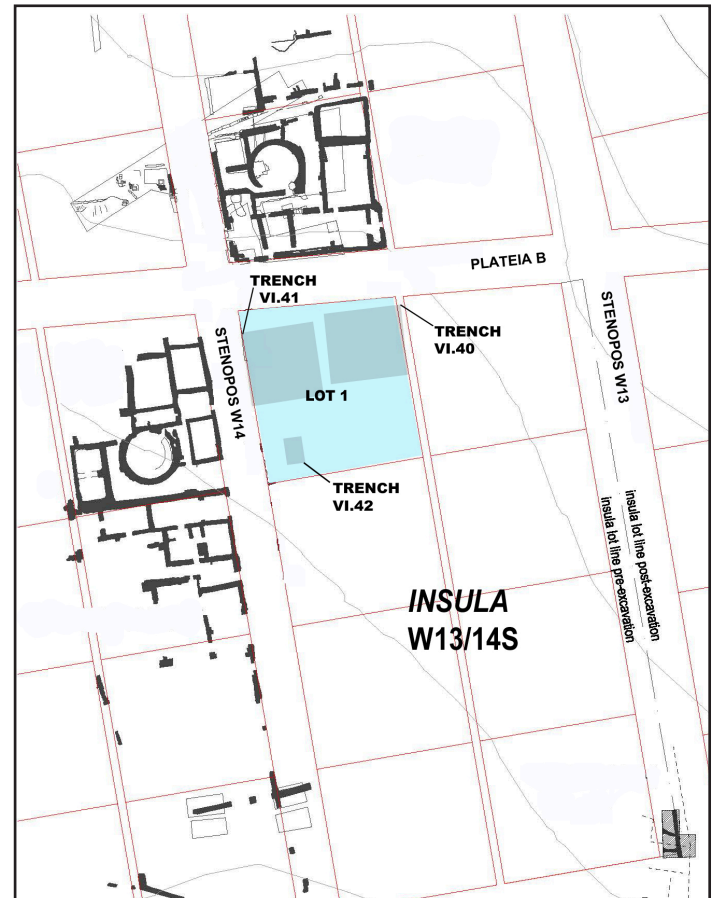


Figure 2: Plan of Contrada Agnese showing the location of Lot 1 and the 2015 trenches.

The 2015 excavations exposed larger portions of the Southeast Building (*aerial photo below*), revealing undisturbed stratigraphic contexts across at least nine distinct rooms. The excavations have greatly improved our understanding of the building's design and multiple phases of use and occupation, the earliest of which dates to the middle decades of the third century BCE. In 2014, we discovered several large storage vessels (*pithoi*) in the northeast room of the building. In 2015, we found several more of these vessels (*Figure 3*) in the same room, strengthening the hypothesis that this part of the Southeast Building was dedicated to storage. Certainly the most eye-catching discovery of 2015 was a silver coin (*Figure 4*) minted during the reign of the Syracusan monarch Hieron II (276-216 BCE). It is the first of its type found at Morgantina! Among the most notable discoveries of this season were thirteen terracotta column drums within one room of the building, some still stacked one atop another (*Figure 5*), and a feature that we are tentatively identifying as the foundation for a staircase. Did the Southeast Building have an internal peristyle and second story? Only further investigations will tell, so please follow our progress at the CAP website: www.themagazzino.org.



Figure 5: Terracotta column drums found stacked in the Southeast Building. Circular terracotta bricks of this type are commonly found in houses at Morgantina. They would have once been coated in plaster and offered an inexpensive alternative to stone.

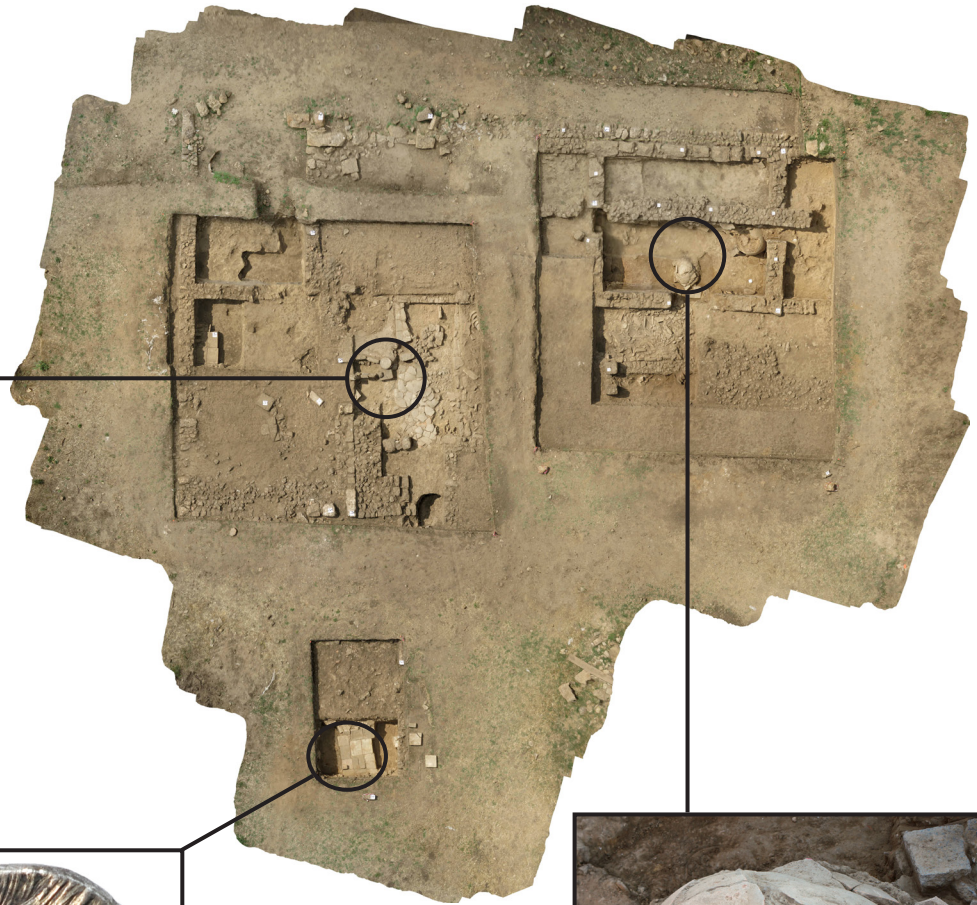


Figure 4: Silver octobol of Hieron II (276-215 BCE).
Obverse: Athena facing l. / Reverse: Pegasus flying l., IEPΩNOC



Figure 3: Storage vessel found smashed on the floor. A broken millstone lies beside it.



Figure 6: Christy Schirmer separates out organic materials from a soil sample collected in 2015.

The CAP Environmental team continued to systematically collect and analyze archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological materials from our excavations. In doing so, we aim to provide a clearer picture of ancient diet at Morgantina and, ultimately, contribute to a broader understanding of land use and agricultural production in the Hyblaean plateau of southeastern Sicily. Preliminary analysis of environmental samples collected thus far by CAP has produced revealing assemblages of animal (sheep/goat, pig, cattle, red deer, various marine shells) and crop species, including at least two varieties of wheat (*Triticum aestivum*, *Triticum dicoccum*), barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), legumes, grapes, olives, and vetch (*Vicia ervilia*). Yum!



Figure 7: Katie Breyer excavates a large storage vessel, the contents of which will be analyzed by the CAP Environmental team.



Figure 8: Kiersten King carefully excavates a terracotta louterion base.

The CAP Geospatial and Data teams continued to develop our digital recording system that was designed to improve the dissemination of information, both within the group and with the wider archaeological community. The CAP team is employing a variety of technologies—unmanned aerial vehicles for daily trench photography and photogrammetric software for three-dimensional reconstructions, to name only two—that allow us to collect and interpret data in ways that were not available to earlier excavators.

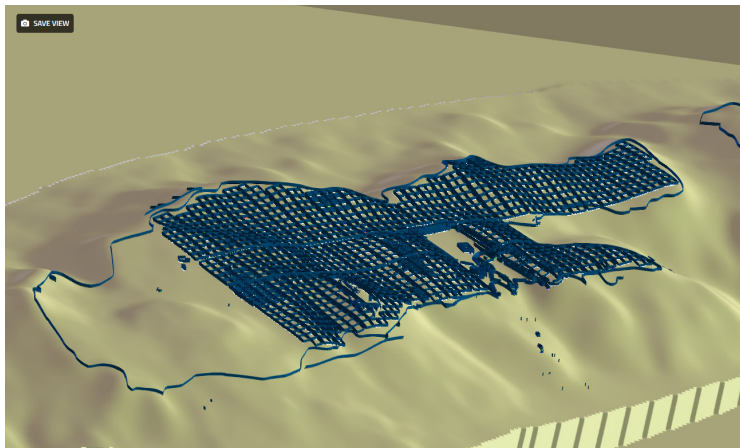


Figure 9: The proposed plan of the Classical and Hellenistic city overlaid onto a digital elevation model (DEM) of the Serra Orlando ridge, created by Robert “Ben” Gorham and Kevin Ennis.



Figure 10: A 3D photogrammetric model of a CAP trench. Models such as this allow us to record the progress of the excavation in highly-accurate ways.



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I want to thank the Department of Art & Archaeology at Princeton University, the Smalling Family Foundation, and individual contributors for their generous financial support, which has continued to make our fieldwork and research possible. Your generosity has allowed us to provide opportunities and training for a new generation of classical archaeologists!

Yours faithfully,

D. Alex Walthall

Director, Contrada Agnese Project (CAP)

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GIVE FOR THE DIG!

The ongoing success of our project rests on the generous support of individuals like you. Each charitable donation helps to make our fieldwork and research possible. Since 2013, more than 75 students from over twenty US colleges and universities have participated in CAP excavations. We hope to double that number by 2018, while continuing to keep the excavation experience free of cost to students, asking only that they cover their airfare to and from Sicily. Learn more about the student experience at Morgantina by reading some student reports below or by visiting the CAP website (www.themagazzino.org). All gifts are tax-deductible and are used to support the CAP excavations. Every donation makes a difference!

Want to “Give for the Dig”?
There are two easy ways to give:

SEND A CHECK TO:

Vanessa Noya
Department of Classics
University of Texas at Austin
2210 Speedway; C3400
Austin, TX 78712-1738

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Visit UT's secure online giving portal.

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Checks can be made out to the
University of Texas
with a memo line that reads:
“Walthall - Morgantina Excavations”



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CAP 2015 TEAM ROSTER

CAP Director: Alex Walthall (*UT Austin*)

Field Supervisors: Randall Souza (*SUNY Binghamton*) + Jared Benton (*UVictoria*)

Trench Supervisors: Elizabeth Wueste (*Berkeley*), Andrew Tharler (*Bryn Mawr*), + Steve Gavel

Assistant Supervisors: Katharine P.-D. Huemoeller (*Princeton*) + Ben Crowther (*UT Austin*)

Museum Team: Annie Truetzel (*Princeton*) + Mali Skotheim (*Princeton*)

Architecture Team: Giancarlo Filantropi + James F. Huemoeller (*AAR*)

Data Curation Team: Leigh Lieberman (*Princeton*) + Luke Hollis (*Archimedes Web Solutions*)

Geospatial Team: Robert “Ben” Gorham (*UVA*) + Kevin Ennis (*UPenn*)

Environmental Team: China Shelton (*Framingham State*), Christy Shirmer (*UT Austin*),
Savannah Schultz (*UOregon*), Michael MacKinnon (*UWinnipeg*), + Jonathan Flood (*UT Austin*)

Ceramics Team: Catherine Baker (*UCincinnati*) + Sabina Ion (*UCincinnati*)

Conservators: Aislinn Smalling (*UPenn Museum*) + Rafaella Greca

Safety Officer: Teresa Arena (*Università di Catania*)

Volunteers: Skyler Anderson (*Princeton*), Nicole Berlin (*Johns Hopkins*), Katie Breyer (*UCincinnati*), Sarah Buchanan (*UT Austin*), Lauren Bock (*UT Austin*), Nathan Carmichael (*UT Austin*), Sarah Caruso (*UVA*), Paul Cochran (*UT Austin*), James Currie (*Warwick*), Mary-Evelyn Farrior (*Tulane*), Katie Gibbon (*UT Austin*), Sarah Gorman (*Old Dominion*), Kiersten King (*Bryn Mawr*), Faith McFadden (*Duquesne*), Lauren Russo (*LDR Coaching*), Matt Sibley (*USydney*), Jeremy Turner (*UArizona*), Anne Williams (*UVictoria*), Einav Zamir (*UT Austin*).



REPORTS FROM CAP 2015 TEAM MEMBERS: CONTRADA AGNESE PROJECT (CAP) 2015



Report from Savannah Schultz

Undergraduate Senior (University of Oregon)

CAP Volunteer: 2014, 2015

I began excavating with CAP in 2014, and I am pleased to say that the past two summers have contributed to many wonderful and lifelong memories. I have had the opportunity to learn so much about the site and explore many different aspects of the excavation. This year I was very fortunate to work with the environmental team looking at the organic material that was found in soil samples taken from the trenches. I gained so much knowledge by working alongside an amazing environmental team. This year we were able to get a better idea of what types of food were common to the area. Working here has cultivated a better understanding of archaeology and all the processes that make up a successful excavation. CAP is an amazing environment to learn, but also to establish strong friendships. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to meet so many kind and intelligent people, who now serve as role models for the type of person that I hope to be one day.



Report from Jeremy Turner

M.A. Candidate (University of Arizona)

CAP Volunteer: 2015

The Contrada Agnese Project at Morgantina was a godsend for my career as a Classical Archaeologist. I had previously been on excavations elsewhere in the world, but my experience was severely lacking in the Mediterranean sphere; Contrada Agnese filled that gap and then some. I was given the opportunity to work with very talented scholars from across the U.S., gain exposure to the various aspects of an excavation in the Mediterranean outside of digging in the trench, all the while living in one of the most charming communities in Sicily. I must also credit Contrada Agnese for helping me discover my academic interests. While washing pottery, I became interested in the provenance of the pieces: where were the Morgantinoi getting their clay and tempering materials and what could that tell us about trade and social networks in Italy and the Mediterranean? I owe a lot to the Contrada Agnese Project and am forever thankful for the opportunity.

Report from Sarah Caruso

Undergraduate Senior (University of Virginia)

CAP Volunteer: 2015

Volunteering for CAP was one of the most influential experiences of my life. As a major in classical archaeology, I couldn't wait to travel to Sicily and get my trowel in the dirt. I quickly understood that the work was hard but still more satisfying than I could have hoped for. I looked forward to riding each morning with my fellow diggers down to the archaeological site, where new discoveries and friendships were made every day. We worked together to uncover several ancient structures. Along the way, I developed skills that I can take with me for future fieldwork and in life in general, such as collaborative skills, problem solving, and being able to recognize several different forms of pottery! Education was no second player to this project. I learned so much about the culture, art, conservation, environment, and architecture of the ancients which only enlivened my love for the Classics all over again. I will never forget my experience at Morgantina, not only on account of the rich history and beautiful location of the site, but also on account of the people who made it so very special.





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Report from Nathan Carmichael

Undergraduate Senior (University of Texas at Austin)

CAP Volunteer: 2015

I joined the CAP team with prior excavation experience, so I came in with expectations for both myself and the dig. I was eager to work in the field, even under the mean Sicily sun, and I saw this program as an opportunity to learn more about Sicily and its Hellenistic material culture. The excavation and countryside fulfilled every expectation. I was, moreover, amazed by the sense of community that pervades every facet of the program. The CAP staff and veterans sacrificed so much of their time and energy to ensure the joy and productivity of the team. We were spoiled with daily meals, local wines, and a succession of wild speeches. We all knew, or learned, the characteristic toils of excavation: early mornings with very many *uova* (eggs), days ruled by a blazing sun or rain showers, and the unpredictable shower supply in town. Despite these challenges, I felt as though I belonged to a very large and especially strange family.



Report from Mary-Evelyn Farrior

M.A. Candidate (Tulane University)

CAP Volunteer: 2015

This past season was my first summer with CAP, and I already cannot wait for the 2016 season. As a new excavator unfamiliar with the stratigraphy of the site, I was amazed at the intricate puzzle presented to us through the soil of the Contrada Agnese; such complex layers, while utterly confusing at moments, points to the rich history of habitation and use within these city blocks. As I continue with my graduate education, I hope to expand upon my work at Morgantina and examine the confluence of Roman and Greek influence within the site. While the work itself was fascinating, the greatest joys of CAP are the people involved. CAP gathered such a talented – and fun! – group of people; I have such great memories of many wonderful meals and conversations on site and in town. I had a fantastic time in Aidone, exploring the town and getting to know its very friendly citizens. I look forward to reuniting with friends, American and Sicilian, in the coming summers!