Excavating Morgantina

The Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship provided me with the opportunity to excavate this summer at Morgantina with the American Excavations at Morgantina: Contrada Agnese Project (CAP). I am honored to have been granted the chance to work on an excavation for the first time and also to experience what will be a critical part of my career as a scholar and as an archaeologist. The CAP team is comprised of talented and motivated individuals who are devoted to working together, and I am fortunate to have been able to learn and work with them at Morgantina. This unique opportunity allowed me to launch into a future of archaeology.

I worked in Morgantina’s Southeast Building to study and clarify the architectural relationships and various functions of the northernmost rooms. The excavation’s focus on the sequence of construction events was holistic in its approach and involved everyone in discussions of transformation and preservation in human activity and social behavior. Our studies revolved around ongoing conversations that evaluated and reevaluated each context in a dynamic manner that brought the extant structure to life. While I mostly worked in the field, I was also offered the chance to shadow school teams as they processed our finds. The tendency of CAP to encourage teaching and learning as a fundamental policy in the field and in town allowed for a greater understanding of the many aspects of excavating that I might not have had elsewhere. Moreover, being able to participate in the processes of ceramics, collections, conservation, geospatial data, environmental data, and more built my own experience at Morgantina into a framework of meaning.

The particular community that surrounds the excavations at Morgantina is a testament to how ancient sites exist in the fabric of modern-day life. Locals and visitors engage with what is
left behind in a myriad of ways, yet Morgantina brought to light a necessary and intentional engagement of archaeologists in the community that hosts them. Ancient sites interact with modern communities as pieces of cultural memory and heritage and participation in these ancient sites is a participation in the memory of that space. The special relationship that those on the excavation have garnered with the people of Aidone is vital to maintain, because the site is so valuable to modern identity, in addition from its value as an excavation that yields so much information about who inhabited the area two thousand years ago. CAP does this well and strives to acknowledge this value in its interactions with the community of Aidone. It was a joy to work at Morgantina this year and to be an active part of the effort and energy of those around me.
Fighting the Sicilian sun for good photography on site

Watching the many religious festivals of Aidone

Exploring the historical and cultural sites within Aidone