

The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



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INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER

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The Newsletter is published four times a year by the Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University. Annual subscription price is \$7.50. Museum membership, subscription, and editorial correspondence should be addressed to the Horn Archaeological Museum, Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University, 9047 US 31, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0990, Telephone 269-471-3273, Fax 269-471-3619, e-mail hornmusm@andrews.edu.

Volume 37.1
Winter 2016
ISSN 1095-2837

San Miceli 2015

Between May 21 and July 7, 2015, the Institute of Archaeology completed a second season of excavations at the site of San Miceli, a Late Roman/Byzantine village and basilica located about 300 m north of the town of Salemi, (Province of Trapani), Sicily. Participants at the site included an international team from the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, Peru as well as other countries. Andrews University was represented by professors Constance Gane, Paul Ray, Paul Gregor, John Reeve, Teresa Reeve and Randall Younker. The Italian team was organized by Dr Elisabeth Lesnes and Giorgia Lanzarone. The graduate students from Andrews included Chris Chadwick and Shellie Cox (field directors), Anne Oyerly, Jacob Moody, and Justin Singleton.

The archaeological ruins of San Miceli first came to light in 1893 after a couple of locals found a gold coin in a field owned by Signora Mistretta Girolama, wife of Gaspare Spedale. Shortly after this discovery, John Bavaria (Giovanni Baviera) and Antonino Lo Priesti, archaeology enthusiasts, contacted Antonino Salinas, then director of the National Museum in Palermo. Salinas immediately pursued the discovery, corresponding with the municipality of Salemi, during which time he arranged an excavation of the site that commenced in October of that year.

Salinas excavated in three basic areas: the basilica to the north; a large late Roman building complex in the middle; and a smaller late Roman building to the south. Salinas also excavated some 58 tombs, mostly in and around the basilica (although his plan shows at least 4 tombs within the large Roman complex). After Salina's work, the site was poorly protected; the basilica's mosaics in the central nave were provided with some protection with the construction of a wooden

(cont'd on p. 2)



San Miceli 2015 Excavation Team.

structure, while the mosaics in the northern aisle were consolidated and reburied. The walls of the western apse as well as the northern and eastern walls of the basilica were also reburied.

Because of the continuing questions concerning the dating of the different phases of the San Miceli Basilica and how this structure and its dating relates to the emergence and early development of Christianity in western Sicily, as well as questions concerning the nature and date of an apparent Roman/Byzantine occupation/settlement to the south of the Basilica, the Institute of Archaeology at Andrews University requested and was granted permission to conduct new excavations at the site in hopes of resolving these outstanding questions.

Two seasons of excavations have now been conducted in two different areas within the San Miceli archaeological park during the summers of 2014 (June 10 to July 6) and 2015 (May 21 and July 7) by a team of Andrews University faculty and graduate students as well as a group of international volunteers and local archaeologists and enthusiasts from Salemi (coordinated by the Archaeological Group) and elsewhere in Sicily.

The first area, designated as Field A, is located south of the basilica and the ticket kiosk, just north of the south wall of the archaeological park. It was known that in addition to his excavation of the Basilica, Salinas had also conducted excavations south of the church (further south than Field A) and had found wall lines and architectural elements of some fairly substantial building(s) in this area that appeared to be part of a settlement of uncertain size (village or town). He also found several burials in and near this southern construction area. We hoped that Field A would reveal additional buildings of this settlement, between that of what Salinas discovered and this Basilica.

The second area of excavation (Fields B and C) was north of the Basilica nave (that is currently protected by a small building). We planned to re-expose the mosaics of the north aisle as well as the

north wall, the northwest corner, and the northeast corner, in hopes of finding more definitive data for the dating of the various phases of the Basilica.

Field A: Chris Chadwick's team discovered a large structure of as yet undetermined size. Present evidence indicates it was founded in the early part of the 5th century AD and destroyed in the latter part of that century as confirmed by a room full of crushed amphorae (storage jars). The building was rebuilt in the late 5th or early 6th century and continued in use until it was destroyed a final time in the mid-7th century AD, as testified by the discovery of two coins (one gold) of Constans II. It has been suggested that this destruction was the result of an early Muslim raid against Sicily, noted both in ancient Catholic and early Arabic sources.

Fields B and C: The big surprise for our work in Fields B and C, supervised by Shellie Cox, was the discovery that instead of one basilica with three floor phases as reported by Salinas, there were actually two basilicas with the first two floors of Salinas belonging to Basilica I and the third and last floor of Salinas belonging to Basilica II. Ceramics and coin evidence indicate that the First Basilica, as well as some auxiliary rooms to the north of the church, was founded in the time of Constantine II in the mid-4th century. The floor of this church was remodeled with a more elaborate mosaic around the end of the 4th or early 5th century AD. Three tombs were uncovered below the north aisle of the church and in the courtyard that date to this period. Two of the tombs included adult females who possessed elaborate earrings and finger rings, indicating the wealth of the leaders of the Christian community. The Church and adjacent north store rooms were destroyed in a major conflagration in the late 5th century AD, perhaps by one of the Vandal incursions that were known to have taken place in Sicily during this time. The date for the destruction was derived from the ceramics (including distinctive 5th century amphorae and oil lamps). The Church was completely rebuilt with new walls and a new mosaic



John Reeve.

floor. This church survived until the mid-7th century when it was destroyed at the same time as Building A to the south.

While we now have tentative dates for the beginning and end of the two basilicas, the one found by Salinas and the other by our team, there is evidence of a significant occupation of the site prior to the building of the basilica. Some of this evidence is the early pottery found in the fields around the site that dates from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century AD. There are also worked stones from monumental buildings that were found reused in later structures. In the basilica at least four fluted column drums and a capital from a pre-Basilica I structure were found, indicating earlier monumental construction at the site. Was this earlier construction Christian or Pagan Rome? Was it from a Roman temple, an earlier Christian church, or perhaps an impressive Roman villa or way station? Further excavation is needed to answer this and other questions. Whatever the case, it seems that San Miceli was occupied during the transition from pagan Rome to early Christianity. (Randall W. Younker)



ASOR 2015

The venue for the 2015 Annual Meeting of the *American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR)* was at the Intercontinental Buckhead Hotel, in Atlanta, GA, and was held between November 18-21. The meetings were attended by 875 registrants, who listened to 450 plus paper presentations, and viewed 40 posters. Susan Alcock, of Brown University, was the speaker for the plenary session this year, with a paper entitled “Stepping It Up (Like a Ziggurat): The Place of ASOR in the 21st Century?”

Other professional organizations where sessions on archaeology were offered in relatively close proximity were the Society of Biblical Literature, held on November 22-25, and the Near East Archaeological Society, held on November 17-19.

Madaba Plains Project members and affiliates who presented papers included: Gary Rollefson, with Yorke Rowan, Alexander Wasse, Austin Hill, and Morag Kersel (Excavation and Survey in the Wadi-al Qattafi, Jordan: Results of the 2015 Season); Bethany Walker (New Perspectives on Village Life at Tall Hisban, Middle Islamic Period); Kent Bramlett, with E. R. Taylor, Monique Vincent, and Douglas Clark (New 14C Dates for the Late Bronze and Iron I Strata for Tall al-‘Umayri); Jody Washburn (Prayers in Caves—A Reevaluation of the Beit Lei and el-Qôm Inscriptions); David Graff (Central Jordan Epigraphic Survey); Monique Vincent (Early Iron Age Households and Community at Tall al-‘Umayri, Jordan); Abelardo Rivas (Cultic Objects of Lights from Ataruz); Basem Al Mahamid (Transition from Nomadic to Settled Life in Iraq al-Amir Village, 1800-1950); Stephanie Brown, with Katie Simon and Christine Markussen (A Geo-physical Survey of Iron Age Busayra in Southwest Jordan); Hanadi Al-Taher (The Transitional Period between the Ayyubid-Mamluk and Ottoman Periods in the Light of the Archaeological Excavations at the Site of



Giorgia Lazarone.

Umm Zuwaytina); Douglas Clark, with Suzanne Richard, Christian Anderson, Leer Greer, Lawrence Geraty, Ervin Taylor, Megan Miller, Ronald Nance, Karimah Richardson, Kent Bramlett, and Kristina Reed (A DNA Profile of Four Humans from Bronze and Iron Age Jordan); Justin Singleton (Broadening the Geographic Context of Biblical Archaeology to the Central Mediterranean: Sicily); Shellie Cox (A Reexamination of the Mortuary Basilica at San Miceli, Sicily); Christopher Chadwick (Excavating at San Miceli, Sicily: Two Seasons at a Late Roman Village); Giorgia Lazarone (North African and Middle Eastern Influences in Early Christian Art in Sicily: The Case of the Mosaics in the Basilica of San Miceli in Salemi); Elisabeth Lesnes (The Circulation of Ceramics in the Overall System of Mediterranean Exchange: The Role of Sicily in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages); Matthew Vincent, with Chance Coughenour, Mariano Flores Gutierrez, Victor Manuel Lopez-Menchero Bendidcho, Dieter Fritsch, and Marinos Ioannides (Integrating Data: A Holistic Approach to Cultural Heritage—The Case of the painted Church of Asinou, Cyprus from the EU Initial Training Network for Digital Cultural Heritage); and Bert de Vries (Reopening an Ancient Entrance for the Modern Community: Preservation and Rehabilitation of the Commodus Gate at Umm el-Jimal).

Those who chaired sessions and business meetings this year included Randall Younker, with Al Leonard (Sicily and the Levant: Diachronic Perspectives on Interconnections); Douglas Clark (Madaba Plains Workshop); Bethany Walker (Consultation of Dig Directors in Jordan); and Lawrence Geraty (Madaba Plains Project Staff Consultation).

Poster Presentations were made by Abelardo Rivas and Rhonda Root, with Robin Johnson and Ariel Soliz (Mutidisciplinary Comparative Analysis of Neolithic Structures in Cavan Buren and Similar Early Bronze Structions in Cisjordan and Transjordan); Matthew Vincent, with Chance Coughenour, Fabio Remondino, and Bruno Kessler (Project Mosul: Preserving the Past through Crowd-Sourced Imagery); and Monique Vincent, with Matt Vincent and Jillian Logee (Balking at Balks: New Approaches to Section Drawings).

At the Near East Archaeological Society, Paul Ray presented a paper entitled “The House: Basic Material Unit of Ancient Society”; Ralph Hawkins, a paper entitled “The Early Israelite Highland Villages and Modern Family Values”; and Robert Bates, a paper entitled “Recent Discoveries at Khirbet Ataruz and their Implications for Iron Age Cult.” (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



RANDOM SURVEY

Ancient Selinus Revived:

In ca. 650 BC colonists from Greece settled on a river on the SW coast of Sicily, naming the place Selinus. It soon became a prosperous city, with a number of temples honoring Greek deities. In 409 BC the city fell to Carthage. Evidence has been found of lives suddenly interrupted when the city was stormed, including half-eaten food remains left behind by fleeing residents, and unfired pots and tiles waiting to be placed into kilns, abandoned by workers. Archaeologists now have a comprehensive plan of the entire city.

Tomb Found at Pompeii:

Italian archaeologists have recently found a nearly-intact tomb, near the Herculaneum Gate of Pompeii, dating to the 4th century BC, at a time when the Samnite people controlled the city. The tomb contained the remains of a 35-40 year-old woman, along with numerous ceramic vessels, including amphoras, that are thought to have contained cosmetics, food or wine.

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Ancient Egyptian Garment:

The world's oldest garment was rediscovered in 1977 among a pile of linen cloth in a museum. Originally excavated in 1912, in a mastaba (tomb) in the cemetery at Tarkhan, Egypt, the shape of this garment is a V-neck with pleated sleeves and bodice. The garment has recently been submitted to C14 analysis, which indicates a pre-Dynastic date of 3482-3102 BC, during the early Naqada III (Gerzean) period. Linen textiles, being composed of flax fibers, grow relatively quickly, and are quite suitable for radiocarbon dating.

Women's Seal Found in Jerusalem:

Personal seals, used for signing documents, that bear names from the First Temple period (ca. 1000-586 BC) are only found on rare occasions. One with the name of a woman, *Elihana bat Gael*, has recently been found in Jerusalem, Israel. While the name *Elihana* is not found in the Bible, the fact that she had a seal of her own would indicate that she had high social status, which would have allowed her to possess property and conduct business.

Tomb Complex found on Cyprus:

Archaeologists have recently discovered a tomb complex near the ancient city of Soloi, which dates between 400 and 350 BC. The underground tomb complex contains three burial chambers. Artifacts include jewelry, figurines and ceramic vessels.

NEWSLETTER



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Siegfried H. Horn Museum

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