

ANNUAL REPORT: THE PRAN'É SIDDI LANDSCAPE PROJECT 2014 FIELD SCHOOL

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Field school students recording a nuraghe

GENERAL

A five-week IFR Field School at Siddi, Sardinia (Italy), took place between June 29th and August 2nd 2014. This field school formed part of the second season of the Pran'è Siddi Landscape Project, which was established to investigate the changing relationships between settlement patterns and environmental and climate change in the area around the modern town of Siddi, located in south-central Sardinia. The four IFR field school students who worked with the Pran'è Siddi Landscape Project were directed by Dr. Emily Holt (State University of New York at Buffalo) with the collaboration of co-director Anke Marsh (University College London) and the assistance of Dr. Mauro Perra, director of the Museo Genna Maria. The project included one additional staff member, field supervisor Bridgid Purcell (University College London).

Our daily routine included fieldwork and lab work from 8am-5:30pm with an hour break for lunch. Twice a week students attended lectures from 6-7pm, and weekends included field trips and guest lectures such as:

- Guided tours of Nuraghe Santu Antine (Torralba), the famous well temple of Santa Cristina (Paulilatino), and the UNESCO World Heritage site Nuraghe Su Nuraxi (Barumini)
- A guided tour of Nuraghe Genna Maria and guest lecture by Dr. Mauro Perra
- A visit to the excavations of Nuraghe S'Urachi, directed by Prof. Peter Van Dommelen (Brown University)
- A trip to the National Archaeological Museum in Cagliari
- Guest lectures on Ethnicity and Trade in the Ancient World by Prof. Taco Terpstra (Northwestern University), GIS and Archaeology by Dr. Joshua Wright (Oberlin College),

Sardinian prehistoric architecture by Professor Sandra Lakeman and Geoarchaeology and Petrography of Nuragic Ceramics by Giusi Gradoli (PhD Candidate, University of Leicester).

Highlights of the season included trips to Alghero and the beach at Is Arutas, a Nuragic campout, and learning to bake traditional Sardinian cookies with our project chef, Luciana Serpi.

Site Survey

Our research goals of investigating broad patterns of settlement change and their relationship to environmental and climatic conditions were significantly advanced this season with several exciting finds. Our site-based survey, which involves detailed documentation of known sites, recovered additional evidence for changing water resources and the importance of water for Middle Bronze Age inhabitants of the plateau. At the end of last season, only one elaborated water source was known on the plateau, a stone superstructure over a now-dry spring. This season, our team discovered two previously undocumented water sources that formed part of Nuragic constructions: a stone-lined well attached to a tholos-style nuraghe on the east edge of the plateau, and another stone-lined well a few hundred meters to the north, which appears to have been part of an unusual ritual structure. The team also located geological evidence for an unelaborated spring located about 20 meters from a nuraghe on the south side of the plateau, again strengthening the connection between water resources and Middle Bronze Age site selection.

Field Survey

Our field survey, which investigates a GIS-based random stratified sample of local terrain types that was developed with the collaboration of field school student Kian Williams, also documented complex patterns of drainage and water sources on the plateau. Additionally, our field survey located evidence of long-term occupation on the plateau, including low walls and clearance cairns that may date to the Neolithic period, small huts that may be related to Nuragic occupation, early modern field walls and animal drive lanes, and recent field walls that appear to have been stacked to follow earlier constructions. One of the most exciting discoveries made during the field survey was a probable basalt quarry where a shaped block associated with the construction of Late Bronze Age nuraghi was found.

Geoarchaeological Survey

This season's geoarchaeological survey involved tracing the paths of palaeochannels that originated on the plateau and documenting evidence of human interaction with these changing water resources. Our geoarchaeological survey was able to document evidence of a lowering water table in the form of new springs that had formed partway down the sides of the plateau along the paths of former water courses. We also documented terraces along these former streams, showing ancient efforts to create and preserve agricultural land by preventing soil erosion. These terraces have not yet been dated, but their small size in relation to the deep cuts in the bedrock caused by water erosion suggests that they date to a period when the springs on the plateau were already beginning to run dry.

Ceramic Analysis

Field school students continued the analysis of ceramics from Progetto Pran'e Siddi (2009-2011; Perra and Holt, directors), making excellent progress toward the completion of the study. The Progetto Pran'e Siddi ceramics were excavated at the site of Nuraghe Sa Conca Sa Cresia, one of the Middle Bronze Age towers on the Siddi Plateau. Working with the ceramics from Sa Conca Sa Cresia helped students develop the familiarity necessary to identify ceramics during field survey as well as allowed them to contribute to our growing understanding of pottery making techniques and local ceramic typologies during an important period of occupation in the Siddi area.

The Pran'e Siddi Landscape Project had a very exciting second season, and we are looking forward to a productive laboratory and study season next summer. We will return to fieldwork in 2016.