

ANNUAL REPORT: TUNISIA-ZITA 2014 FIELD SCHOOL

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Students take a break from excavating to show off their great work

This project is a partnership between scholars from the Tunisian Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), UCLA, and Brown University. We focus our excavations and survey work on the site of Zita, a Punic and Roman urban mound. Our goal is to conduct multi-pronged research into the cultural evolution and history of the site, which is in the Tripolitanian region straddling the modern borders of Tunisia and Libya.

During the 2014 season we carried out excavations in three areas. One team worked at the Punic sacrifice precinct (*tophet*) to find a rich deposit of urns under stela still standing upright. We brought the sealed *tophet* urns to a radiologist for investigation using X-Rays – something that has never been done before. A second contingency exposed more of the Roman forum, a third measured pollutants in the ancient industrial zones. Many burnt olive pits were discovered, showing that the residents of Zita (Olive City in Punic) were consuming olives throughout all periods we have excavated.

The Zita project includes ethnographers and archaeometrists that work together to understand contemporary ceramic traditions and technologies and their relations to the past. We are particularly interested in understanding where local clay sources are and whether these have been utilized in antiquity as well. Our ethnographers and archaeometrists worked together with local potters to identify clay sources.

In addition to all of this field research, students attended diverse lectures ranging from studying Rome and its provinces, to archaeological sciences and zooarchaeology, to Phoenicians and the modern history of Tunisia. Special emphasis was given to recent political changes in Tunisia – the birthplace of the Arab Spring – and students not only engaged in formal lectures of the topic but also frequently discussed the subject with our local colleagues and students.

At this time, the Principal Investigators (PIs) are working on a number of publications – including peer reviewed articles, a monograph, and conference papers. Dr. Brett Kaufman, the leading PI of this project, is co-organizing a conference at Brown University Joukowsky Institute, *State of the Field: The Archaeology of North Africa*. Zita staff and a number of students from the project were invited to attend this conference. In addition, data has been made available to students who are pursuing thesis projects, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.