Institute for Field Research
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN FIELD TRAINING

ANNUAL REPORT: Vulci 3000 2018 FIELD SCHOOL

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Vulci 3000 is an international research project started in 2014 with non-invasive technologies and since 2016 with archaeological excavations in the urban area of Vulci. It is the first archaeological stratigraphic excavation in the last 70 years of history of the site. The project achieved in a few years an outstanding international reputation and it can count on the collaboration of several EU universities. The IFR field school is as well the first one admitted to work in the area in the last one hundred years.

The main goal of this school is to offer a multidisciplinary overview of archaeological fieldwork activities with a strong focus on digital and remote sensing technologies. Students learned how to deal with the single context method of excavation (so called Harris method), the Harris matrix, the identification and study of archaeological material, and also how to manage and integrate different technologies such as drones, laser scanners, 3D digital photogrammetry, robotic total stations, rover-robots, virtual reality (Oculus), 360 camera shooting, digital repositories and paperless data recording (by tablet computers).

The IFR school contributed (by a rotation of 2-3 students per team) substantially to every phase of data-capturing and to inventory, identification and classification of all the archaeological finds. The excavation (in collaboration with a specialized team of speleologists) of an Etruscan-Roman cistern gave the students the opportunity to work on sieving and flotation of a large single-context archaeological deposit (with a huge number of archaeological finds from Etruscan to Roman times). This activity was extremely useful also for the identification of different classes of material: animal bones, metal objects, pottery, tools, seeds and other paleo-environmental data.

2019 archaeological excavations were primarily focused on two main objectives: the excavation of a large and articulated architectural complex built in Roman times (maybe identifiable as sanctuary or public building) and the excavation of a cistern (over 80 cubic metres).

Students were Introduced to Etruscan and Roman archaeology; methodology of archaeological excavation such as, archaeological legislation in Italy, classical archaeology, lectures on pre-Roman and Roman archaeology, Romanization of Etruria and the urbanism of Central Italy, principles of archaeological conservation and archaeological stratigraphy, and guided tours of the East necropolis of Vulci. Students training in archaeological excavations were supported by presentations (power point and guidelines) focusing on archaeological stratification stratigraphical units, Law of Archaeological Stratification, Harris Matrix, and "single context method" recording system. Practical fieldwork consisted of: Stratigraphical units, physical relationships understanding, in order to identify the most recent unit to be excavated., stratigraphical units' documentation, and discussions about the interpretation of stratigraphy in relation to the archeological context.

This summer the amount of traditional lectures and theoretical classes were drastically reduced in order to improve a more engaging learning by practice and on site activities. This was particularly successful since we had the chance to test and monitor student's activities on daily basis.

In the season 2019, since we asked the students to bring (eventually) their own computers, we had the chance to test their digital learning on weekly basis. In particular, the sessions of 3D digital photogrammetry were particularly successful and they all achieved very good results.

We organized an olive oil testing tour in Canino (https://www.oscc.it/en/), one of the best products in Central Italy. Local producers introduced the workflow of the olive oil production from the traditional methods to the most modern and advanced technologies. Here the city of Canino (who co-shares the ownership of the Park of Vulci) and Duke University offered a very nice reception with local products and olive oil.

Also, we celebrated the IFR school with a special pizza party with music on a terrace of our apartments (with a view over the ocean) with local wines and cheese. During the party, we released the special Vulci 3000 awards of the school for the best student-digger and the best one in digital applications. The release of these awards (a diploma and a special t-shirt of Vulci) was an informal way to honor the student's participations and their dedication to the project. All the students enjoyed the event very much.

Finally, we organized a gelato-party, with a taste of the best Italian gelato in town.

The IFR undergrads had also the chance to interact with another group of Duke undergrad students (supported by the Duke Bass Connections grant) which were working on the production of a documentary film on the project and on several tests with 360 video cameras. This interaction had for sure stimulated the interest of the group towards other mini research projects.