

Archeologists uncover new economic history of ancient Rome

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Davide Tanasi, Ph.D., assistant professor in the USF Department of History, leads a team in uncovering the ancient Roman villa Durreueli at Realmonte. Credit: Dr. Davide Tanasi

Some of the mystery behind one of Sicily's largest ancient Roman villas is now solved thanks to a team of archeologists from the University of

South Florida in Tampa, Fla. They're the first to successfully excavate the 5,000 square meter Roman villa of Durreueli at Realmonte, located off the southern coast of Sicily.

Project director Dr. Davide Tanasi, assistant professor in the USF Department of History, and his students worked alongside USF's Center for Virtualization and Applied Spatial Technologies (CVAAT). Together they created terrestrial and aerial 3D scanning of the entire villa, an invaluable tool in guiding the excavation and interpreting the villa's architectural phases.

Through a month of excavations, they determined the villa was consistently occupied between the 2nd and 7th century CE and reconfigured to settlement in the 5th century Common Era (CE). That conclusion comes following the discovery of new walls, floor levels, staircase and water channel.

The team found cookware and lamps along with a large quantity of African Late Roman pottery and related materials such as kiln spacers. This leads researchers to believe an important function of the village was to produce pottery, bricks and tiles in industrial scale, helping explain the economic history of Late Antique Sicily.

Parts of the Roman villa of Durreueli at Realmonte were uncovered during a Japanese-led excavation effort in 1979-1985, but the team did not discover such an extensive part of Roman history.

USF worked in conjunction with the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage of Agrigento and plans to continue its research next summer. Such an effort is important to USF and Tampa, as it is a sister city with Agrigento, the provincial capital in which Realmonte is located.



The excavated ancient Roman villa is located off the southern coast of Sicily.
Credit: University of South Florida

Provided by University of South Florida

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