

Unearthing Chthonic Deities at Gangivecchio: An Exploration of Fertility Worship Throughout Sicily

Due to the lack of archaeological research in the interior of Sicily, there is a gap in the scholarship concerning the ancient contact and exchange between the cultural groups that either visited or inhabited the island (Finley 1971). Further investigation of archaeological sites in central Sicily may help enhance our understanding of ancient economic and cultural exchange. One site worth consideration for such investigation is the Greco-Roman site of Gangivecchio, located in the southeast region of the Palermo province. The site possibly dates from the Greek colonial period (7th to 6th centuries B.C.) all the way up to the 19th century, and has archaeological evidence of both Greek and Roman cultural groups living within the area (Storey 2013). In the summer of 2012, students from the University of Iowa and the University of Palermo excavated Particella 19, the site of a Roman villa of the High Roman Empire. We shall compare the materials discovered during this field season to published research from the more established coastal excavations of Sicily, along with select well-studied interior sites. The comparison will focus on the material evidence of chthonic deities and fertility worship that proliferates many of the sites on Sicily (Halloway 1991) to similar religious components found at the site of Gangivecchio. This research is an effort to facilitate a better understanding of the dispersion of materials and ideas associated with religious practices throughout the entirety of ancient Sicily.

Works Cited

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Holloway, R. Ross. *The Archaeology of Ancient Sicily*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Storey, Glenn. "Filling a GAP in Our Knowledge: The Gangivecchio Archaeological Project (GAP)." *The Classical Association of the Middle West and South Conference*. Iowa City, 2013.