

# Ethiopian Archaeology and the Archives

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For summer 2013 I was awarded a FLAS fellowship to study Amharic in preparation for my proposed dissertation research studying slavery and archaeology in Ethiopia. I had to travel to Boston University to attend the summer course and, to my surprise, discovered that I was the only student enrolled! With no prior background in Amharic, the intensive one-on-one classes with Dr. Telahun Gebrehiwot helped me advance from beginning to intermediate proficiency in the language.

While in Boston I also conducted archival research at Harvard University and University of Massachusetts-Amherst on the life and legacy of Dr. William Leo Hansberry. Although not widely known in the field of archaeology, Hansberry was the first African American archaeologist to study African archaeology and taught courses on ancient African civilizations at Howard University from the 1922 to 1959. He was also the first scholar to be awarded the African Research Award from the Haile Selassie Prize Trust and taught a number of prominent leaders, including Nigeria's first president, Nnamdi Azikwe. I recently submitted an article outlining Hansberry's teaching pedagogy and wider contributions to African archaeology for publication in the November 2014 issue of *The Archaeological Review*.

In addition to my research in archaeology, I also work closely with the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program's African American History Project collecting

oral histories related to African-American life in Gainesville and the greater North Florida area. We recently received the 2013 Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi ("Voice of the People") Award for achievements in using oral histories as a means of furthering social justice. Over the past three years we have been exploring themes of racial violence, dispossession, education and community.

In 2014 I will be traveling to Ethiopia with Professor Steven Brandt and several undergraduate students to conduct archaeology in the southwestern Ethiopian highlands at the Mochena Borago Rockshelter. In collaboration with students from Addis Ababa University, Wolaita Sodo University and University of Cologne, we will explore human behavioral patterns associated with early human migrations. Home to the source of the Blue Nile, Axumite Kingdom, and one of the oldest continually written languages in the world, Ethiopia—and the wider Horn of Africa—is a region rich with historical significance and archaeological potential. While in Ethiopia I hope to also take the opportunity to locate a dissertation site and begin formulating research questions that

blend my interests in historical archaeology and African history. It is my belief that a better understanding of Ethiopian slavery will expand our knowledge of the East African slave trade and contribute to a more holistic understanding of what archaeologist Charles Orser has described as a "truly global perspectives on the African diaspora."

*Justin Dunnavant is a PhD student in anthropology and FLAS fellow (Amharic, summer 2013 and 2013-14).*

