



A team of research scientists from the University of Nice has arrived in Formentera on a research project concerning the Can Blai archaeological site. The project, entitled “Can Blai. Un fortín bajoimperial de vigilancia costera en el Mediterráneo occidental” (“Can Blai. A lower-imperial coastal-surveillance fort in the Western Mediterranean”), will extend throughout all of July and will be accompanied by a series of conferences organised by Ricardo Gonzàlez, co-director of the study and professor of Ancient History and Archeology at the University of Nice, and Jordi Fernández, director of the Can Blai archaeological digs of 1979-1981 and director of the Museu arqueològic d'Eivissa i Formentera.

The main goals of the project are a precise dating of the Can Blai settlement and clarification surrounding its former use. The site is one of the most important in the Pitiüses and its excavation in 1979/1980 left significant portions untouched. The particular layout of the grounds – with a limited area containing visible and workable remains – rendered impossible the task of ascertaining reliable information about its possible size and structure. Preliminary analysis of the site, which had been completely overgrown by vegetation and covered by a grove of pine trees, led researchers to believe that the structure had been built upon a square foundation.

That responses to these questions had continued to evade scientists – both those familiar with the particularities of the Can Blai archaeological site and others, specialists of defensive

structures of the lower Roman empire – led the University of Nice researchers to reopen investigative work on the subject.

Moreover, the campaign will serve in the educational process of university students. The Can Blai archaeological site will be a work site for Art History and Archaeology students from University of Nice – Sophia Antipolis in work-training.

The project is promoted by the Museu d'Arqueologia d'Eivissa i Formentera (MAEF) and by the Laboratory UMR 7264 of the CEPAM (Cultures et Environnements: Préhistoire, Antiquité et Moyen Âge), an institution of the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and by the University of Nice.

The team of scientists is composed of: Dr. Frédérique Bertoncello (CNRS and UMR 7264 investigator); Dr. Frédéric Gayet, professor of Roman History at the University of Nice – Sophia Antipolis; Dr. Marie-Jeanne Ouriachi, professor of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Nice; Dr. Gouguen Davitian, CNRS investigative engineer; Sabine Sorin, CNRS technical drawer; Rodolfo Rubio, writer and director of scientific documentaries.

The project, which will start today and continue through to 27 July, will consist in an area excavation of the artefacts found in the Castellum structure's inner area, a space of some 400 m², left untouched after the investigative work done there between 1979 and 1980. A prospection will be carried out in the area surrounding the structure in an area of 230 hectares. Researchers will attempt to identify microrelleus and other remains in the subsoil of the forest where the Can Blai site is located.

Visits will be open to the general public during the excavation from Monday through Saturday, 10 am to 1 pm, and the public is also invited to attend the series of conferences planned in the Sala d'Actes de Cultura (Cinema), most of which are scheduled at 8 pm.