

Thanks to the generosity of the Waldbaum Scholarship, I had the opportunity to participate in seven weeks of excavation at the site of Azoria, in East Crete. Azoria is the best-excavated Early Iron Age-Archaic settlement on Crete. The site is occupied from at least the Early Neolithic period through the Hellenistic. Around the end of the 5th century, there is evidence of large scale destruction by burning and abandonment. Survey and excavations carried out since 2002 have revealed a large Archaic settlement (built around and on top of earlier phases) featuring both domestic complexes as well as extensive communal areas. Work at the site today seeks to explain the relationship between these types of spaces and the nature of everyday life in Archaic East Crete. The settlement at Azoria featured heavily in my undergraduate thesis and my knowledge of the site and its significance was greatly enhanced by this opportunity.

The average day in the field began at 6:00 am when students rode up from the hotel to the center of town to buy breakfast at the local pastry shop. The staff, trench supervisors, and student assistants then piled into pickup trucks of the local workmen who hauled us almost 1.5 kilometers up a winding mountain road to location. From there, a short but steep climb led to the excavation site. Since the settlement is located on a very precipitous slope, almost horizontal in some places, I learned how hard it can be to excavate in steep conditions. I began work in area G of the settlement, where we excavated a Late Archaic food processing room. We uncovered a number of interesting food processing tools, including mortars and grindstones, as well as a number of food storage vessels. We also discovered evidence of Hellenistic pottery and architecture, indicating that the space was adapted and reused in the Hellenistic period for a similar function. In this way, G1700 illustrates the complex and overlapping nature of space at Azoria. While the excavation (and my own personal interest) focuses primarily on Archaic

spaces, it was interesting to see how space and architecture were reused in the Hellenistic period by soldiers stationed at a fort built out of and over the Archaic settlement. In particular, this storeroom affirmed suspicions that the Hellenistic settlers rebuilt Archaic domestic structures, mostly on the east side of the settlement, to suit their needs in the later period. From there, I moved into the B area of the settlement, where we uncovered another storeroom, this time of Archaic date. In this trench, I had the opportunity to dig out a nearly complete (although smashed) transport amphora, as well as fragments of a large pithos. These vessels were preserved largely as a result of the extensive deliberate burning of this particular room and other nearby structures. The burning is indicative of the 5th century destruction and abandonment of the site, although the questions of why the inhabitants abandoned their settlement so systematically, and where they went, still remain.

My summer at Azoria also provided the unique opportunity to learn about different archaeological specializations. Led by Dr. Donald Haggis of the University of North Carolina and Dr. Margaret Mook (pottery specialist) of the Iowa State University, the senior team also features an architectural specialist, Dr. Rodney Fitzsimons; an archaeobotanist, Dr. Margaret Scarry; and a zooarchaeologist, Flint Dibble. The highly particular and diverse talents of the senior staff provided a unique opportunity for myself and other students to experience a number of archaeological specializations. A lecture series allowed each staff member to present their research from the site as well as to discuss their particular role in the excavations. Flint Dibble offered the exciting opportunity for students to practice sorting bone fragments gathered from the site. This hands on experience was a unique opportunity to learn about bone typology and identification.

In addition to these opportunities, students at Azoria rotate between excavating in the field and working at the Institute for the Study of Aegean Prehistory, East Crete (INSTAP East Crete, or the Center). At the center, we rotated through a number of important tasks including soil flotation (of soil samples taken from the site), residue sorting (of the floated soil samples), bone washing and sorting, and pottery sorting. These tasks provided further opportunities to learn about the specializations of archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, and pottery.

In all I am grateful to have had the chance to work at a settlement that is directly related to my scholarly interests of communal ritual and dining, socio-political organization and state-formation in the Early Iron Age. This experience not only affirmed my research to date but solidified and expanded my interest in this period and region as I prepare for my first year of graduate school. I am grateful to the Waldbaum Scholarship for providing me with my first opportunity to experience archaeological fieldwork at such a complex and fruitful site.