

ANNUAL REPORT: AZORIA PROJECT (GREECE) 2017 FIELD SCHOOL

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Azoria: Aerial view of the excavated areas of the South Acropolis

The Azoria Project completed its tenth year of excavation and 16 years in the field. The work this year produced remarkable results that will transform our understanding of early Greek urbanization, urbanism, and details of political economies in agro-literate city-state systems. The results of this season's work will be presented at invited lectures at Oxford and Columbia universities as well as at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in January of 2018. While we are preparing reports for *Hesperia*, the journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, we are also working on individual contexts for final publication as well as a monographic treatment of the results, *The Archaic Cretan City: Excavations at Azoria in Eastern Crete*.

This year we were exploring parts of public or civic buildings, established with the foundation of the city in the late 7th century BCE, which were designed to mobilize and store large amounts of agricultural produce—especially wine, oil, olives, grapes and raisins, wheat, barley, and other fruit and nuts—for formal venues of public dining. One surprising discovery this summer was a large building on the west slope (the West Building), which appears to have been a storage magazine—that is a monumental structure devoted exclusively to the state-level management and storage of produce for redistribution, no doubt to the civic dining halls on the hillslopes above. The building is over 35 meters long and seven meters wide, with nine interconnected rooms containing rows of *pithoi* (large terracotta storage jars) and a number of smaller storage vessels. Although we have not yet studied the finds, the total storage capacity of this building could have exceeded 40,000 liters of storage. This volume of agricultural storage and the building's proximity and connection to other civic buildings suggests that this is a civic storeroom—evidence of centralization and control of produce by the city-state for various

venues of public consumption, or for payments to workers and skilled craftsmen for work conducted for the city.

This work now steers us in various directions, but a central goal is to explore how changing patterns of food procurement and redistribution relate to the developing urban environment. The project's emphasis on the identification of the earliest and formative stages of "civic institutions"—in which rituals of commensality are viewed as fluid social practices, combining cultic and political behavior and articulating political hierarchies and relationships—has created both models and perspectives relevant to studies of urbanization and city-state formation in the Mediterranean and beyond.

The IFR students' involvement in the work was central and critical to generating these results and in advancing the broader goals of the research project, while the students themselves benefited from working with an international team with widely differing field experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives, and in forming an open-ended dialogue on the question of the emergence of the Greek city-state. The participation of anthropologists, prehistorians, classical archaeologists, historians, zooarchaeologists, palaeoethnobotanists, and anthropologists, and indeed a range of students whose interests and fields of study reflect these different perspectives and methodologies, has encouraged us to integrate our work into a broader study of the occupants of Azoria as producers, consumers, and as agents of environmental and social change in physical and cultural landscapes.

The process and practice of our work at Azoria engaged students in developing an awareness of the importance of cultural resources in understanding long-term history; and by working with members of local village and archaeological communities, to understand the nature of regional identity structures and connections to the archaeological and historical landscape. Students were also introduced to a developed program of collaborative site stewardship at Azoria, a direct outcome of a long-term conversation with various scholarly, student, and lay audiences and stakeholders, measurably increasing local and regional participation and awareness of cultural resources, and encouraging responsible and sustainable development.

We consider public education—local as well as global generational education— to be the most important outcome or benefit of our work, but perhaps the least measurable in the short term. Archaeology produces and tries to explain the physical remains of history, comprising the past human activities, events, and achievements that we use to understand cultures, sociopolitical configurations and identities, and on a fundamental level, who we are as a species and a world culture. Our on-going work at Azoria plays a vital role, not only in training a new generation of field archaeologists, but more generally in public education in the humanities; in involving various communities and constituencies in the recovery, interpretation, conservation, and preservation of an ancient landscape that they may understand as an extension of their own past and cultural heritage, as something to be preserved as a legacy for all people and generations.