The Azoria Project (www.azoria.org) is the archaeological excavation of an ancient Greek city on the northeast coast of Crete in the Aegean, sponsored by the Department of Classics and the Research Laboratories of Archaeology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Excavations at the site resume in the summer of 2013, beginning a second five-year campaign, under the auspices of UNC-CH and the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

The goals of excavation at Azoria have been to document the form of an early Greek city, and to study urbanization in the Aegean. Excavation in 2013-2017 investigates the transition from the Early Iron Age (1200-700 B.C.) to Archaic (700-500 B.C.) periods, the foundation and early development of the city, and the evidence for emerging social and political institutions.

The organization of the earliest Greek cities on Crete is reflected in contemporary inscriptions, but actual material remains of 6th and early 5th-century B.C. occupation have hitherto been lacking, a condition constituting a veritable gap in the archaeological record on the island. The results of our work at Azoria effectively fill this gap, while providing a rare opportunity to explore the origins and first appearance of Greek cities in the Aegean.

About 600 B.C., there was a major change in the settlement of Azoria, which we think was a result of the development of a new urban center and accompanying sociopolitical and economic institutions. The settlement was destroyed and rebuilt, and a new city plan was established, along with new kinds of houses, civic buildings, and temples. Excavations at Azoria constitute the first systematic archaeological exploration of an Archaic Cretan city, while augmenting our knowledge of the agricultural and pastoral resources exploited by Greek communities in the earliest stages of urbanization. Our work thus constitutes the first archaeological test case of urbanization in the Archaic period, studying changing land use, social and political structure, and economic organization, by means of an integrated framework derived from excavation—a dialectic between faunal, botanical, environmental, archaeological and historical data.
GOALS AND PURPOSE

There are three primary goals of the new campaign of excavation at Azoria. The first is to understand the character and chronology of the Early Iron Age-Archaic transition. This program of work includes the excavation of an early Greek temple (ca. 1000-700 B.C.), which was discovered in 2006 but left unexcavated. The second goal is to recover more Archaic-period houses (ca. 600-500 B.C.), with the aim of understanding the form, organization, and economy of the early Greek household. The third goal of work is to complete excavation of the civic buildings.

Participants in the project include archaeologists and students specializing in ancient architecture, pottery, metals, animal bones, plant and wood remains, human skeletal remains, ancient Greek history, coinage, and inscriptions; as well as technical specialists in archaeological illustration, photography, conservation, and various scientific analyses. The Azoria Project provides on-site training for students of classical archaeology and related areas. We currently support a team of nine graduate students, and three undergraduate field school programs drawing some 40 students per year from participating institutions.

The Azoria Project has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Philosophical Society, and the National Geographic Society. However, we remain dependent on private contributions to meet the costs of our annual operating budget. The project staff includes 88 people: 10 senior staff archaeologists, six graduate student trench supervisors, three graduate student assistants, 40 undergraduate student assistants and field-school participants, 19 local workmen, four pottery washers, and six technical staff. Donations to the Azoria Project may be used to support housing and subsistence costs, excavation and finds processing, equipment and supplies, travel and local transportation, workmen wages, or other associated expenses.

TO MAKE A GIFT TO THE AZORIA PROJECT

Mail-in Contributions

Please make checks payable to the Arts and Sciences Foundation. In the check’s memo line, please write “Azoria Project Fund.” Your contribution is tax deductible and you will receive a receipt.

Donations should be mailed to the following address:

Margaret Costley
The Arts and Sciences Foundation
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
134 E. Franklin St., CB# 6115
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-6115

Inquiries may be addressed to Professor Donald Haggis, who can be reached at dchaggis@email.unc.edu or 919-951-8197, or Margaret Costley, who can be reached at margaret.costley@unc.edu or 919-843-0345.

Online Gifts to the Azoria Project

Visit http://giving.unc.edu/asf. In the box labeled “Please select a Fund,” choose “other” and search for Azoria. Select the fund labeled “Classics-Azoria Project (0581)”

All fieldwork and artifact photos are from the Department of Classics’ excavation at Azoria. (Courtesy Azoria Project Archives)