

STRATIGRAPHIC EXCAVATIONS AT AZORIA IN 2015

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One of the most perplexing problems that we face at Azoria is understanding the Early Iron Age (EIA) history of the site—that is, the nature of occupation and activity between the abandonment of the Late Minoan (LM) III C settlement until the establishment of the Archaic city at the end of the 7th century. Excavations over the past two seasons have sought to answer basic questions of the form, extent, and chronology of Early Iron Age settlement. Our goal is to understand the development of the site in periods leading up to the Archaic urban transition.

The startling discovery of the Protoarchaic Building (EIA–Orientalizing Building) on the southwest slope in 2006, and its recent excavation in 2013 and 2014, presented us with stratigraphic and functional problems (Fig. 1). First, the building appears to be a free-standing structure of 8th- and 7th-century date—occupation phases span over a century of use—incorporating and oriented to the LM III C–Protogeometric (PG) tholos tomb. Juxtaposed to the tomb is a large hall with a central hearth with associated debris and dump deposits suggesting large-scale drinking, dining, and hearth-pyre sacrifices (Fig. 1). Other rooms in the building were clearly devoted to food processing and ceramic production. The building is thus not domestic in character, and while it may form part of a larger complex, we have no evidence of a contiguous settlement of houses. Protogeometric and Geometric pottery is found in the building and elsewhere on the site—within Archaic foundation deposits and recycled into 6th-century use contexts—but we have yet to recover a continuous stratified sequence of PG–Late Geometric (LG) occupation that characterizes the

development of the contemporary settlement of the Kastro (located on the peak to the south of Azoria). Although we acknowledge that this settlement gap might be a condition of rebuilding in both LG and earlier 7th-century phases, recent excavation is demonstrating recurring stratigraphic patterns that may relate to how the site was used in the Early Iron Age.

Thus, we began our work in 2015 with the hypothesis of an Early Iron Age gap in occupation—the abandonment of the site as a settlement in LM III C, but with continued use of the location as a cemetery as evinced by the tholos tomb in trench B3700, which has distinct LM III C and PG use phases (Figs. 1, 2). We could also reconstruct a return to the site by the latter part of the 8th century, but the character and function of this rebuilding phase remained a problem. In efforts to explore these stratigraphic discontinuities and the early history of the site, we returned to two areas that might provide answers: the upper west slope of the peak, in the area of the LM III C bench sanctuary, and the lower southwest slope in the area of the Protoarchaic building and the LM III C–PG tholos tomb.

B5000: Late Minoan III C Wall

In 2015, we expanded excavation in trench B5000, a location immediately south and east of the LM III C–PG tholos tomb (Fig. 2). We had just begun to expose a large LM III C wall in this trench in 2014. In 2015, we targeted the area of an Archaic street between spine walls. In the sounding, we penetrated the late 7th-century street packing and cobble fill, exposing the full extent of the LM III C wall, which is preserved to about 5.0 m



Figure 1. Aerial view of the Protoarchaic Building (EIA–Orientalizing Building). Photo D. Faulmann.



Figure 2. Aerial view of southwest terraces (B5000, B5300). Photo D. Haggis.

in length. A floor surface is well preserved along the east side of the wall, and a layer of occupation debris along the west side produced, among other finds, a fragmentary terracotta plaque, an object normally associated with LM IIIC bench sanctuaries (Fig. 3). Similar to the construction in the LM IIIC building in trench B800, the wall is made of large dolomite boulders in its foundations and second course, with smaller field stones used in the upper extant courses. The south end of the wall has no corner or return to the east to contain the floor surface, but two boulders projecting to the west at the wall's southern end could indicate a room on the west side.



Figure 3. Late Minoan IIIC plaque (15-0407) from Locus B5318.9. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

It appears that the construction of the Archaic spine wall and cobble fill layer may have disturbed the wall's southern end and largely obliterated a surface to the west. Furthermore, two displaced boulders, roughly in line with the wall, were discovered a little beyond the southern end, suggesting a continuation of the wall to the south where the construction of the Archaic street and the lower spine wall may have destroyed this and other LM IIIC buildings.

Given that a floor surface is preserved along the full extent of the east side of the LM IIIC wall, we can say that a room or rooms were clearly associated with the construction, and that it continued farther to the south where the sherd material is LM IIIC but the wall is no longer extant. The wall's northern end appears to have been constructed to abut the outer southeastern corner of the LM IIIC–PG tholos tomb. That is, as preserved, the wall seems to stop at the tomb's southern side, which has a regular built facade about five courses high that forms the south face of a wide rectangular platform on which sits a J-shaped peribolos recovered in 2014 (Fig. 2). The platform is an early 7th-century construction built over the LM IIIC wall and directly above the tholos tomb, using the wall as part of its foundations.

The LM IIIC wall would have originally extended up to and behind the tholos tomb along its east side. The later platform obscures the wall at its northern end, where it terminates in another curved feature—a semicircular enclosure or peribolos about 1.5 m wide, formed from a shallow two-course high row of dolomite fieldstones (Fig. 2). As in the case of the J-shaped feature, this semicircular construction had no identifiable associated surface. Below the rocky fill supporting the semicircular peribolos there was a well-preserved LM IIIC floor surface with a large fragment of an LM IIIC krater (Fig. 4). The krater



Figure 4. Late Minoan IIIC krater (15-0184) from Locus B5013. Photos Ch. Papanikolopoulos.



Figure 5. Late Minoan IIIC dipped cup or deep bowl (15-0306) from Locus B4702.3. Photos Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

is decorated with multiple loops pendant from the rim band, a central cross-hatched panel, and a horizontal loop with filling ornaments preserved to the right of the panel. Upslope and to the east, in trench B4700, another patch of LM IIIC floor yielded a well-preserved cup or deep bowl (Fig. 5) and provides additional evidence for other rooms to the east along this terrace.

B5300 and B5200: Protoarchaic Building

Excavation east of the spine wall in trenches B5300 and B5200 exposed parts of two rooms, which appear to have been truncated by the Archaic spine wall and street construction (Figs. 2, 6). The rooms thus seem to form part of the same building, perhaps originally extending to the west as far as the east wall of trench B3700, and thus originally overlying the long LM IIIC wall in trench B5000. The east walls of this structure are well constructed and preserved across both rooms—they are some three courses high and use large dolomite boulders in the construction. The north room is about 5.0 m long (north–south). The south room (B5200) has a possible subdividing cross-wall situated about 2.0 m from the northern end. Only about a meter wide strip of floor surface is preserved across both rooms because the Archaic spine wall on the west was later bedded into these spaces, truncating the rooms and obscuring their function and topography.

The pottery associated with these surfaces dates to the 8th and early 7th centuries, suggesting activities connected with the Protoarchaic Building to the northwest, and with the J-shaped and



Figure 6. Aerial view of southwest terraces (B5200, B5300). Photo D. Haggis.



Figure 7. Aerial view of sondages in B3400 and B5500. Photo D. Haggis.



Figure 8. Aerial view of north end of the Communal Dining Building (B3300, B3400). Photo D. Haggis.

semicircular constructions and platform that were built over the tholos tomb, mentioned above. It is possible that these early rooms represent the eastern edge of a 7th-century building that extended to the west, directly over the LM IIIC wall. Perhaps this 7th-century building was bordered on the west by a poorly preserved boulder wall that forms the east wall of the Protoarchaic Building.

B5500: Sondage under an Archaic Room and Street on the Southwest Terrace

Along the edge of the southwest slope, we followed an Archaic street and the west wall (B3526-B5505) of an Archaic house (Fig. 7). Excavation in 2015 exposed the west wall of the Archaic room, B3400, establishing the full extent of the space in the 6th century—two post bases are symmetrically centered in the room and supported a roughly equidimensional 3.20–3.50 m span from both east and west walls to the central posts. Within the room, soundings were excavated against the faces of the west (B5505) and north walls (B3203), revealing an earlier occupation surface lying 0.30–0.50 m below the level of the Archaic

floor. In the northwest corner of this space, the sounding also exposed a short segment of an earlier wall that was constructed with this surface—it is preserved to 1.50 m in length and angles to the southwest, extending from underneath the line of wall B3203. This short segment is most likely a continuation of the eastern part of B3203, which uses similar construction techniques. These soundings indicate the existence of an earlier 8th–7th-century building underlying the hall in trench B3400.

Another early wall (B5506) was discovered at the northern end of trench B5500, on the west side of the west wall of B3400 (B3526-B5505), running at an angle to the southwest—in line with the early phases of wall B3203 (Fig. 7). The north end of the west wall of B3400 was built on top of wall B5506, which is bedded about 1.0 m below the level of the Archaic street, and nearly 2.0 m below the level of the Archaic floor surface of B3400. The wall stands four courses high (large dolomite boulders) and seems to form a corner—a right angle—with a single roughly dressed dolomite block that should be part of a long boulder-wall exposed to the north in trench B5700 (B5704) and running along the western edge of the contour. In the space between wall B5506 and wall B5704, we exposed a narrow patch of floor underlying the fill and street packing.

A3300 and A3400: Early-phase Constructions under the Communal Dining Building

In 2015 we excavated five rooms of the Archaic Communal Dining Building, on the lower terraces of the west slope below the peak. The rooms form a series of kitchens and dining rooms structured in interconnected rows along two terraces. The northernmost kitchen of the complex, A3300, was built into an earlier structure (Fig. 8). In the northeast corner of the trench, north of the Archaic room's north wall, we exposed an earlier (late 8th–early 7th c.) wall and clay floor. The Archaic room had incorporated part of the earlier room's east wall, but its north wall cuts into the earlier floor and abuts the earlier eastern wall. The



Figure 9. Protogeometric B krater (15-0202) from Locus A3312. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

space of this Protoarchaic room is preserved only about 1.0–1.5 m wide, and its north wall has one face constructed of dolomite cobbles and small boulders. It forms a distinctive curve on the north and northeast as it conforms to the bedrock outcrop that projects behind it and along the east side of the adjacent LM IIIC bench sanctuary (D600). Among the contents of this space, there was a Protogeometric B (PGB) krater (Figs. 9, 10) and a nearly complete, low-necked, monochrome cup dated to Early Protoarchaic (Fig. 11). Unusually, this bell krater had stirrup handles, and while it has both the rim profile and interior spatter decoration typical of PGB kraters, the exterior, although worn, is decorated on one side with a panel pattern framing antithetic stylized bees or bee-lotus motifs, with dotted wings, that anticipate those decorations of the 7th century.

On the terrace immediately below A3300 we excavated another space (A3400) that had evidently been abandoned at the time of the late 7th-century rebuilding (Fig. 8). We were unable to complete the excavation of A3400 in 2015, but it appears to have been partially filled in to support the western edge of A3300 to the east and the north wall of A3500 on the south. An interesting feature is a one-course-high paved platform that runs along the western edge of the space. It is made of *sideropetra* and schist blocks and pavers, measures 1.0–1.5 m wide and about 3.5 m long, and runs from about a meter north of the north wall of A3500 nearly up to the south wall of the LM IIIC bench sanctuary. It is possible that the paved platform was an early 7th-century construction established for a purpose related to the earlier LM IIIC shrine—not unlike the Protoarchaic buildings on the southwest terraces, which appear to have been constructed with reference to an LM IIIC wall and tholos tomb.

Comments

The terminus ante quem for the beginning of post-LM IIIC activity on the site appears to be late 8th century. Study of the pottery in the Protoarchaic Building and finds from the early



Figure 10. M. Tzari mending Protogeometric B krater (15-0202). Photo M. Mook.



Figure 11. Early Protoarchaic monochrome cup (15-0215) from Locus A3312. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

phase floor at the north end of A3300 suggest a late 8th or early 7th century date for the foundation of these structures, though we have not determined yet a solid terminus post quem or ad quem date for the foundations. Late Geometric pottery is present or extensive in these deposits, and the phase has been recovered in soundings in B1700 and B3500 in earlier seasons, but the main period of pre-urban activity on the site appears to be the late 8th to early 7th centuries. The material traces, buildings, and installations are concentrated in areas with LM IIIC buildings that were a visible part of the landscape and the material memory of people residing in the region. This renewed interest in Azoria, in the latter 8th or early 7th century, would have been a way for certain groups to assert their connections to the site, and even to individual buildings that had some social relevance—the activities in these spaces and buildings may have served to connect social groups to known or presumed ancestral tombs, and to the LM IIIC bench sanctuary—the latter would have had an important connection to specific households.

The soundings conducted during 2015, in trenches B5300 and B5200, produced more evidence of this Protoarchaic use phase. The extant architecture suggests two or three rooms of a building that was built over the top of the LM IIIC wall. Its location, at the southeastern edge of the Protoarchaic Building and LM IIIC tholos tomb, should point to a function associated with these constructions. The late 7th-century rebuilding effectively destroyed these earlier structures, and their remains were buried in a deep deposit of cobble fill that extended behind the spine wall to the east, forming the foundations for Archaic rooms.

The deposition and rebuilding in B5300-B5200 is similar to the transformation of A3300 in the Communal Dining Building. The Archaic room A3300 effectively cut into an earlier 8th–early 7th-century room, partially using the architecture of the northeast corner, but building over and into the earlier building, leaving only its far northern end undisturbed. The rebuilding is deliberate and destructive, and the condition of earlier LG and Protoarchaic occupation suggests that the transition was relatively rapid and extensive. Seventh century and earlier material is sometimes found in unusually good condition in such spaces (Figs. 9, 11).

The rate of the phase change thus is interesting and important. The transition from a period of localized installations in the 8th and 7th century to one of site-wide renovation at the end of the 7th century was an abrupt and transformative event. It is likely that the Early Iron Age and Protoarchaic objects, recycled for use in Archaic contexts, were derived from selective curation activities during the late 7th-century rebuilding phase. A Daidalic plaque fragment recovered from the Archaic dining room in trench A3500 is a result of such recycling; in this case, the piece was probably removed from a shrine that had once occupied this area of the slope above the Monumental Civic Building. In our first phase of excavation in 2002–2006 we recovered a series of LG and early 7th-century terracotta figurines and plaques from the fill behind the Monumental Civic Building. Such an early shrine would have been the predecessor of the Hearth Shrine (D900)—where a number of LG to Orientalizing figurines were found—and the successor of the LM IIIC bench sanctuary. The likely location would be in the area of A3400, which appears to have been abandoned at the time of the late 7th-century rebuilding phase, and contained a paved platform that extends up to the southern edge of the LM IIIC bench sanctuary.

In the broader region there is evidence for Early Iron Age interest in abandoned LM IIIC settlements and cemeteries, which seems to have intensified dramatically by the 8th century with the construction of burial cists and enclosures, and primary and secondary cremations, nested within the destruction debris of long-abandoned LM IIIC houses at Vronda. The cists at Vronda accommodated multiple cremations over the 8th and 7th centuries, implying the continuation of the tradition of family tombs, but now localized within the still-visible remains of real, fictive, or expropriated ancestral houses (Day 2011). Another important

example of this LG engagement with the LM IIIC landscape is at Chalasmenos, where Tsipopoulou recovered a LG dining building constructed directly on the destruction debris of the LM IIIC settlement and near a PG tholos tomb (Tsipopoulou 2004, 2005). It is this kind of ritual elaboration that is expressed at Azoria, where the LM IIIC–PG tholos tomb was incorporated into an 8th–7th-century communal building.

Thus, during phases of the Early Iron Age and Protoarchaic periods, the act of burial and the choice of location of burial had become social-symbolic references to the LM IIIC landscape, and no doubt ritual focal points articulating regional identities, claims to land, and social affiliations. By the 8th and 7th centuries this process had become formalized through the construction of communal dining buildings and funerary or mortuary chapels (Gaignerot-Driessen 2012, forthcoming). The use of LM IIIC settlements and cemeteries (specific places, tombs, and buildings) for ritual reflects the establishment or appropriation of visible connections to specific early settlements and kinship groups in order to shape new social identities in the formative communities of the Late Geometric and Archaic periods.

Based on stratigraphic work to date, it appears that Azoria may have been largely abandoned as a settlement at the end of LM IIIC, while the tholos tomb, which contained PG burials, is an indication of continued use of the cemetery. Settlement during PG–LG probably shifted to the Kastro, which was the dominant acropolis site in the region during the Early Iron Age. There are residual remains of Early Iron Age activities at Azoria: figurines, pottery, and iron-smithing debris are found in Archaic foundation levels and are recycled or curated in later Archaic contexts. But the surviving built structures and preserved stratigraphy belong to the late 8th and early 7th centuries, and they seem to be concentrated in areas of specific LM IIIC remains. The buildings and deposits evince ritual or ceremonial use rather than normal domestic functions.

The activities were intrusive and actively ritualized in character, implanted as it were within the fabric of the earlier settlement. At Azoria, this process continued throughout the 7th century, indeed lasting far longer than at either Vronda or Chalasmenos. Whatever social restructuring and regional integration may have been encouraged or informed by these ritual interactions, they were ultimately successful at Azoria—perhaps a causal variable leading to the urban transformation. Dating to the end of the 7th century is a clear horizon of rebuilding that buried or destroyed the earlier buildings. The resultant settlement was carefully planned, monumental in form, and complex in the scale of landscape modification, construction, and allocation of labor. This Archaic settlement lasted the duration of the 6th century, culminating in a catastrophic burned destruction in the first quarter of the 5th century.

The construction of the Archaic city at Azoria may be attributed to the evolving social dynamics of the Late Geometric period

and the 7th century, times in which long-abandoned Late Minoan IIIC settlements and cemeteries had most likely become historically significant focal points of rituals that served to legitimate and articulate the form and the limits of local and regional identity and ultimately civic status in emerging cities. Azoria represents the end result of the process.

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THE KENTRO HAS A NEW KILN

Jerolyn E. Morrison

A heartfelt "Thank you!" goes out to the Ms. Foundation for Women for its generous financial support, which has advanced ceramic studies at the Kentro. This year an electric kiln was added to the repertoire of equipment in the W.A. McDonald Laboratory of Petrography (Fig. 1).

The lab was founded in 2002 with the vision and financial support of Dr. Jennifer A. Moody. The primary focus of interest is the study of ancient ceramics by thin section petrography with the use of a polarizing microscope. Under the direction of Dr. Eleni Nodarou, the laboratory conducts five to six petrographic projects annually that address questions which allow archaeologists to better understand ancient life on Crete. Through this work, the Kentro has built an in-house collection of thin sections that includes more than 7,000 slides of ancient pottery. The ceramic samples come from sites all over Crete that date from the Final Neolithic to the Byzantine period.

The addition of the Ms. Foundation kiln allows those working at the Kentro to further their investigation of ancient ceramics by conducting projects that utilize methods of experimental archaeology. Such projects will include extensive geological sampling programs that collect clays and temper from the field to make comparisons with the ancient pottery. This allows one to more accurately identify plausible pottery production centers. One may also manufacture pottery from Cretan clays to test the workability of the raw materials.



Figure 1. Jerolyn Morrison, Tom Brogan, and Eleni Nodarou with the new electric kiln. Photo E. Huffman.