



Making Ancient Cities

SPACE AND PLACE IN EARLY URBAN SOCIETIES

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Urbanization and the Emergence of the Greek *Polis*: The Case of Azoria, Crete

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Perhaps the most striking development accompanying the emergence of the Greek city-state (ca. 1200–480 BC) was the appearance of new urban centers whose form, contents, and construction provided the most visible and effective means of creating, reinforcing, and symbolizing the social, political, and economic relationships that characterized the new polis system. Excavations at the site of Azoria (East Crete) have brought to light an unparalleled collection of architectural data, largely unobscured by later activities, that provides one of the best opportunities to study the architectural correlates of urbanization in the Greek world. This paper explores three levels of the built environment at Azoria – the domestic, the civic, and the urban – and demonstrates that the architectural landscape of the nascent city-state not only served to reflect the dramatic social and political developments that accompanied the emergence of the polis, but in effect, also functioned as an active agent in their creation.

Current models of state formation in the Greek world envision a radical shift in sociopolitical structure from either pastoral or mixed village-farming communities operating within a chiefdom-based or big-man society to more elaborate sociopolitical and economic systems characterized by drastically rearranged social organizations, complex inter- and intraregional trade networks, and more extensive integration between rural landscapes and their new urban centers (Donlan 1985, 1997; Foxhall 1995; Morris 1997a; Nowicki 1999, 2002; Osborne 1996; Small 2010; Tandy 1997; Wallace 2001, 2003a, 2006). This process of transformation, which unfolded at different paces in different regions of the Aegean world from the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200–1050 BC), through the Early Iron Age (ca. 1050–600 BC) to the end of the Archaic Period (ca. 600–480 BC), culminated in the appearance of that characteristic Greek political institution, the city-state or *polis* (e.g., Hansen 2006; Hansen and Nielsen

2005; Morris 1997b; Mitchell and Rhodes 1997; Perlman 2004; Small 2010; Snodgrass 2006; Wallace 2010). One important, yet understudied, aspect of the emergence of the Greek *polis* involves the process of urbanization, a phenomenon that resulted in the appearance of cities throughout much of the Aegean Basin over the course of the eighth through sixth centuries BC (Andersen et al. 1997; Andreev 1989; Kotsonas 2002:50–57; Lang 2002, 2007; Osborne 2005). Indeed, even though the precise definition of the term urbanization varies from culture to culture (Cowgill 2004:526–528; Vink 1997:111–118), studies of numerous preindustrial societies throughout the Old and New Worlds have demonstrated the intimate connection between the creation of urban space and state formation (Adams 1966; Blanton 1976; Cowgill 2004; Fox 1977; Marcus 1983; A. Smith 2003; M. Smith 2003; Hansen 2000, 2002; Nichols and Charlton 1997; Sanders and Santley 1983; Storey 2006). As these studies have shown, the construction of these new urban landscapes provides perhaps the most visible and effective means of creating, reinforcing, and symbolizing the new social, political, and economic relationships in these developing polities (Abrams 1989:48; Abrams and Bolland 1999:263–264; Cowgill 2004:528; A. Smith 2003; see Miller 1995 for Athens).

Despite the integral relationship between urbanization and *polis* formation, however, previous examinations of the role played by the built environment have been hampered by the general paucity of structural remains dating to the seventh and sixth centuries BC (Kotsonas 2002:48–50; Nowicki 2002:150, 170). Whereas studies of larger, “successful” city-states such as Corinth and Athens have yielded abundant historical and archaeological evidence for this field of study, the majority of the architectural data dating to the relevant periods from non-sanctuary contexts remain buried or otherwise obscured by centuries, even millennia, of later construction activities and, as a result, the overall form of these early urban centers beyond their primary cult centers is fragmentary at best (e.g., Harris-Cline 1999; Hurwit 1999:85–137; Papadopoulos 2003:280–297; Pfaff 2003; Rhodes 2003; Robertson 1998; Schmalz 2006; Shear 1994; Weir 1995). Similarly, although the eighth-century BC architectural remains at smaller sites such as Emporio on Chios (Boardman 1967), Koukounaries on Paros (Schilardi 1983), Vroulia on Rhodes (Kinch 1914; Melander 1988), and Zagora on Andros (Cambitoglou et al. 1971, 1988; Green 1990; Vink 1997) are clearly visible in the archaeological record, their potential contribution to this discussion is limited by

the fact that they were abandoned at a relatively early phase in their development.

The dearth of evidence for these initial stages of urbanization is even more pronounced on the island of Crete, where there is a remarkable decline in the quantity not only of settlement remains, but also funerary and ritual activity in the sixth century BC. This situation has led many scholars to suggest that the island witnessed a dramatic drop in population during this period (e.g., Coldstream and Huxley 1999; Kotsonas 2002; Prent 1996–1997; Van der Vliet 1996–1997; Vink 1996–1997). Such a population decline is particularly surprising considering that the preceding three centuries were characterized by intense and dynamic cultural interaction between the inhabitants of Crete, the Aegean islands, the Greek mainland, and the Near East. Moreover, it was precisely during this period that the state entities that dominated the political landscape of the island during the second half of the first millennium BC seem to have had their formative years. New studies being conducted at such sites as Afrati and Kato Syme (Erickson 2002), Eleutherna (Erickson 2004; Stampolidis 1990, 2002), Itanos (Apostolakou et al. 2004–2005; Duploux 2009; Greco et al. 2003), Kommos (Shaw 2000), Praisos (Whitley 2006; Whitley et al. 1995; Whitley et al. 1999), and Vrokastro (Hayden 2004a, 2004b), however, have begun to shed some much-needed light on this so-called Dark Age and, as a result, challenge more traditional views of stagnation on the island. Of particular importance in this regard is the site of Azoria, where recent excavations have produced a wealth of evidence suggesting that the seventh and sixth centuries BC was a period of active sociopolitical development.

Azoria is located atop a double-peaked hill in eastern Crete, roughly 1 km southeast of the modern village of Kavousi and 3 km from the Aegean Sea (Figure 7.1). The site commands an excellent view of the coastal plain of Tholos to the north, and is strategically located at the western end of the system of mountain valleys that leads to the eastern end of the island, and at the northern end of the Ierapetra Isthmus, a narrow neck of land roughly 15 km in length. This isthmus served as a primary route of land-based communication linking the Aegean Sea to the Mediterranean Sea throughout the history of the island. Azoria was first explored by Harriet Boyd in 1900 (Boyd 1901), but it was not until 2002, when a five-year campaign of excavation under the direction of Donald C. Haggis and Margaret S. Mook was initiated, that systematic investigations of the

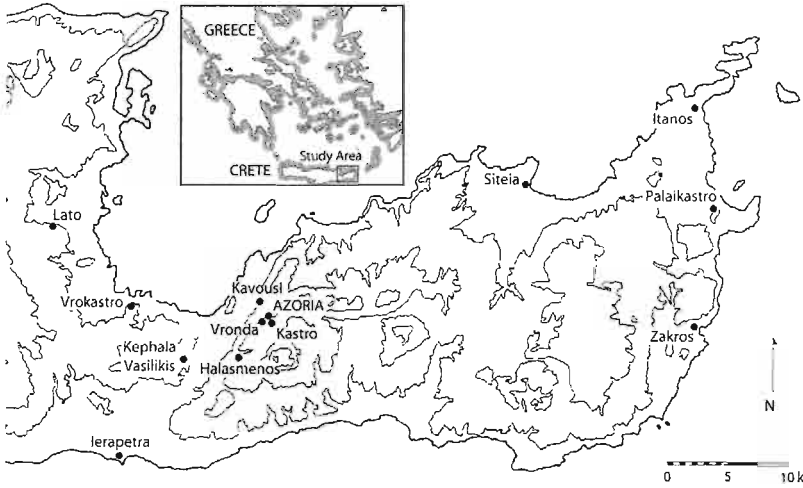


Figure 7.1 Map of eastern Crete, showing the location of sites mentioned in the text (redrawn by author from Coulson and Tsipopoulou 1994:figure 1; inset redrawn from Azoria I:figure 1).

site began (Azoria I-VI). Although these excavations have yielded abundant artifactual and scattered architectural evidence for occupation as early as the Final Neolithic Period (Azoria I:390; Azoria II:276; Azoria III:668–696, 706–707), the primary phase of occupation appears to date to the seventh through early fifth centuries BC, the very period of the so-called Cretan “Dark Age.” Moreover, unlike the majority of other relevant sites in the Aegean, Azoria was abandoned in the first quarter of the fifth century BC, and reoccupied on a very limited scale for only a brief period in the late third and early second centuries BC (Azoria I:372, 379; Azoria II:266–269, 294–295, 305; Azoria IV:1–4). This exceptional occupational history has thus preserved the urban landscape of the seventh and sixth centuries BC in a relatively intact fashion, and provides a unique opportunity to study the process of urbanization as it unfolded in this region of the Greek world (Figure 7.2). This paper explores three functional and ideological levels of the built environment at Azoria (dubbed here, landscapes) – the domestic, the civic, and the urban – and demonstrates that the architectural landscape of the nascent city-state not only served to reflect the dramatic social and political developments that accompanied the emergence of the *polis*, but in effect also functioned as an active agent in their creation.

THE DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE

Excavations along the eastern and western slopes of the North Acropolis and the northern, western, and southern slopes of the

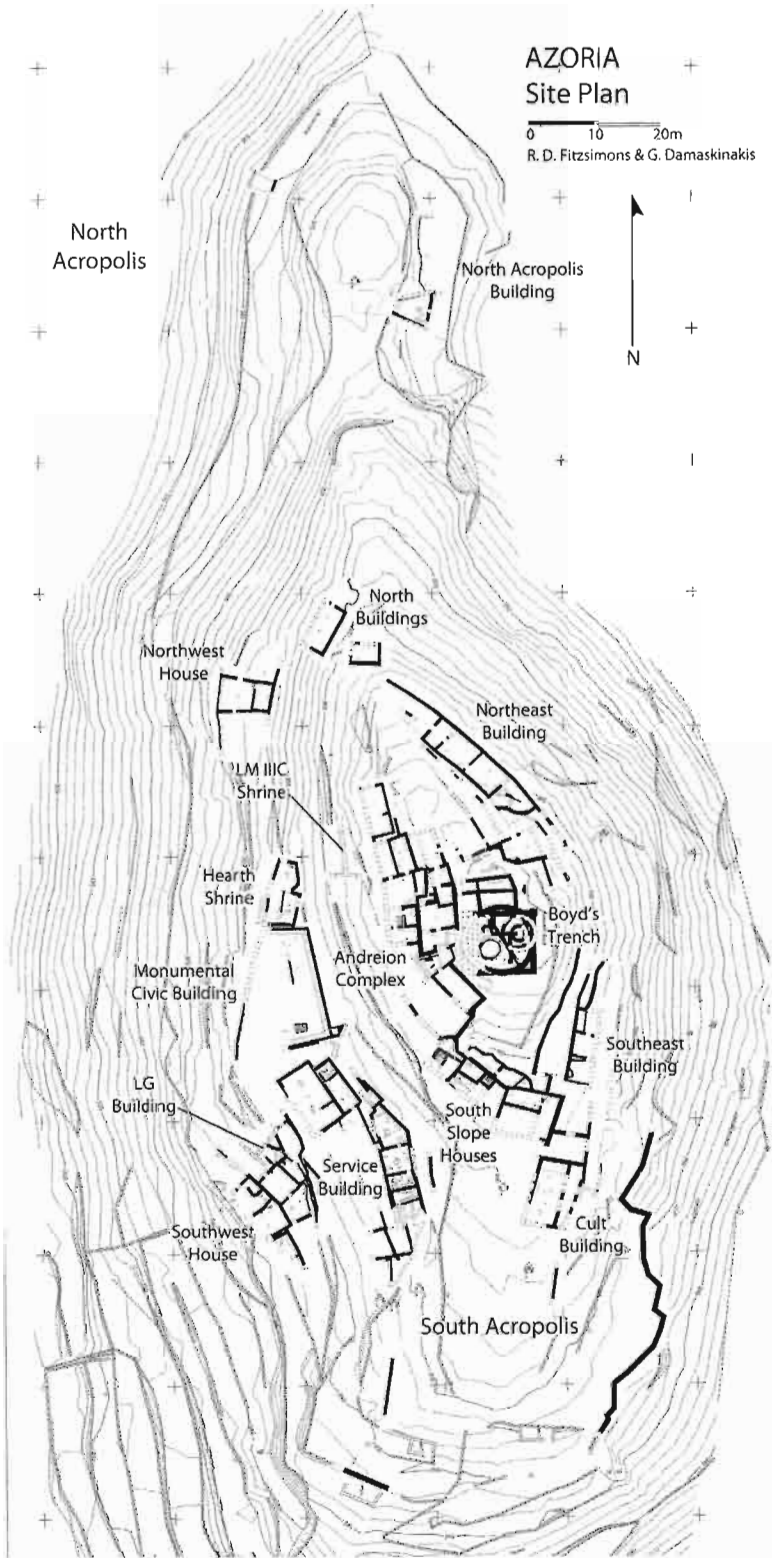


Figure 7.2 Site plan of Azoria (drawn by author and G. Damaskanakis).

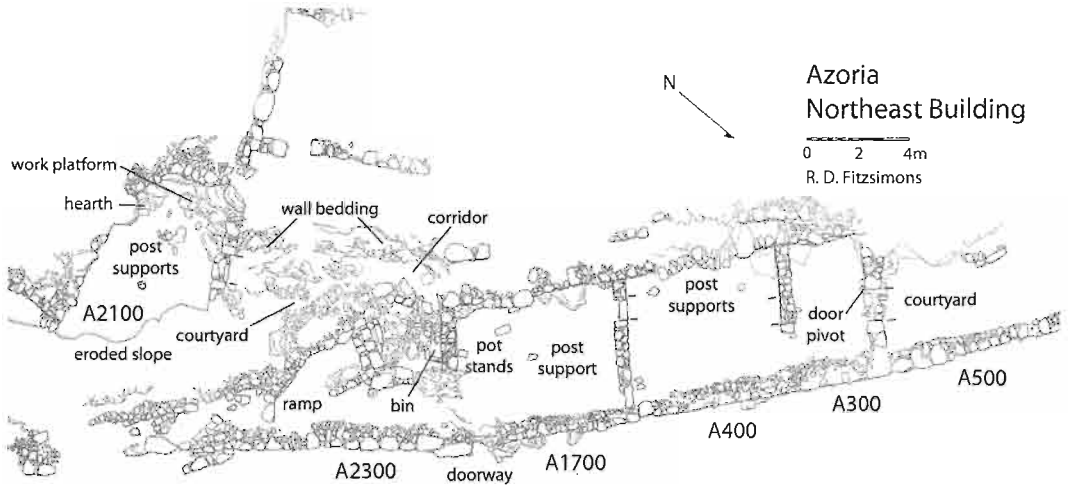


Figure 7.3 Plan of the Northeast Building at Azoria, late seventh/early sixth century BC (drawn by author).

South Acropolis have brought to light the remains of up to a dozen houses, the best preserved and most illustrative example of which is the Northeast Building (Figure 7.3; Azoria I:364–367; Azoria II:246–252; Azoria V:434–437). This structure was composed of a suite of three rectangular rooms (A300, A400, A1700) and one irregularly shaped room (A2300) arranged in axial fashion (northwest-southeast) along a single, broad terrace (ca. 5.30 m wide). The narrow, northwest façade of the building faced onto a small courtyard (A500) that sat at the end of a street leading from the north and was pierced by a well-built doorway framed by megalithic masonry set in the center of the wall. This door opened onto a shallow room (A300), perhaps an entry vestibule, which in turn opened onto a deep, rectangular chamber (A400) that yielded a large collection of drinking, dining, and storage vessels and that has been identified as the main hall of the house. A well-built doorway set into the western part of the rear wall of this room granted access to another large chamber (A1700) found littered with smashed pithoi (storage jars), pot stands, and the remains of cereal grains and olive pits, attesting to its function as the primary storage facility of the house. Additional storage and work space was provided by the stone-lined bin and work platform set into the triangular alcove southwest of the corridor (A2300) that ran southeast from the south corner of A1700. This passage ended at the bottom of a sloped ramp cut into the bedrock at the bottom of a short staircase that opened onto the street running northwest-southeast along the terrace immediately southwest of and above the Northeast

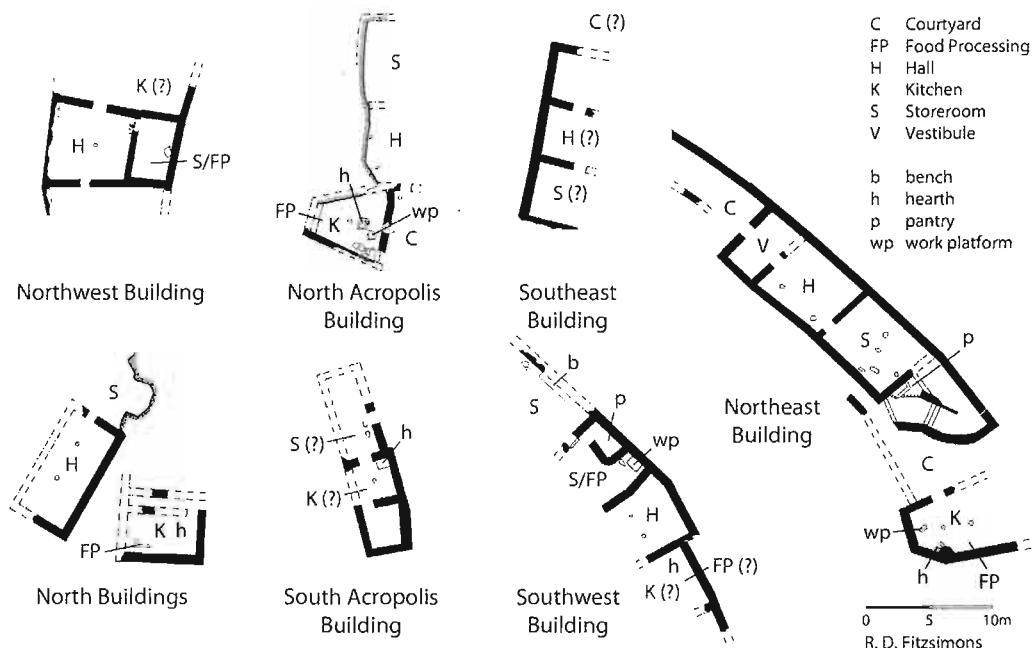


Figure 7.4 Plan of the Archaic houses at Azoria, showing the distribution of room functions, late seventh/early sixth century BC (drawn by author).

Building. The southeast end of this street was marked by a triangular-shaped courtyard (A1800) set before a large, irregularly shaped room (A2100) with a side hearth and work platform that appears to have functioned as the kitchen for the Northeast Building.

Although only partially preserved or awaiting further excavation, the scattered fragments of house remains unearthed elsewhere on the South Acropolis appear to conform to the same basic blueprint of formal and functional arrangement evident in the Northeast Building (Figure 7.4; Azoria I:370–372; Azoria II:265–269; Azoria V).¹ Moreover, the presence of a similarly designed domestic structure on the North Acropolis, the North Acropolis Building (Azoria V:463–477), suggests that this blueprint was not restricted to a specific subsection of the settlement (i.e., the South Acropolis or its summit), but rather extended across the entire site (Figures 7.1 and 7.4). Thus, even though it is true that no two houses were identical in terms of plan, elaboration, or scale, the repeated pattern of archaeological features evident in the extant remains suggests that their builders subscribed to a single, common approach to the conception, design, and utilization of domestic space. This approach was characterized by an emphasis on the front of the house through the construction of an elaborate façade and/or the presence of an exterior court; the

separation of spaces devoted to the storage, processing, and consumption of foodstuffs (i.e., storeroom, kitchen, main hall), with the kitchen often set in isolation from the rest of the house and the storeroom juxtaposed with the main hall; the use of the main hall for multiple domestic, industrial, and social activities, most notably the performance of dining and drinking rituals; and the preference for arranging these functional spaces in axial fashion along a single terrace.

The axial approach to house planning was not unique to Azoria, but appears to have been standard practice on Crete well into the fourth century BC, when the court-centered house common elsewhere in the Greek world made its first appearance on the island (Westgate 2007a).² In fact, the axial house plan can be traced as far back as the end of the Late Bronze Age on Crete, when the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial administration that had dominated the Aegean for the preceding two or three centuries necessitated a radical restructuring of the sociopolitical landscape. Three Early Iron Age sites in the immediate vicinity of Azoria preserve substantial remains of houses that seem to conform to this pattern (Figure 7.1). Although two of them, Kastro (Coulson 1997, 1998; Haggis et al. 1997; Mook 1998, 2004) and Halasmenos (Coulson and Tsipopoulou 1994; Paschalides 2006; Rupp 2007; Tsipopoulou 2004), await detailed publication before a thorough analysis of their domestic landscape can be undertaken, the third, Vronda, provides clear evidence for the prevalence of the axial house plan and its role in both shaping and reflecting the sociopolitical landscape prior to the emergence of the *polis*.

Excavations at Vronda have brought to light the remains of twelve to fifteen houses dating to the twelfth and early eleventh centuries BC (Figure 7.5; Day et al. 1986; Day et al. 2009; Gesell et al. 1995:68–92, 116–117). These houses were organized into several large clusters scattered over the hilltop (Buildings A-B, C-D, E, G, I-O-N, J-K, and L-M), the best preserved of which is Building I-O-N, an agglomeration of at least twelve partially interconnected rooms located along the southwest edge of the settlement (Figure 7.6). Detailed analysis of the structural remains associated with this complex has revealed that its final form resulted from the addition and expansion of several new suites of rooms, collectively dubbed Buildings O and N, to an initial three-room complex, Building I, over the course of several generations (Glowacki 2002:39–42, 2004:127–131, 2007:132). Similar

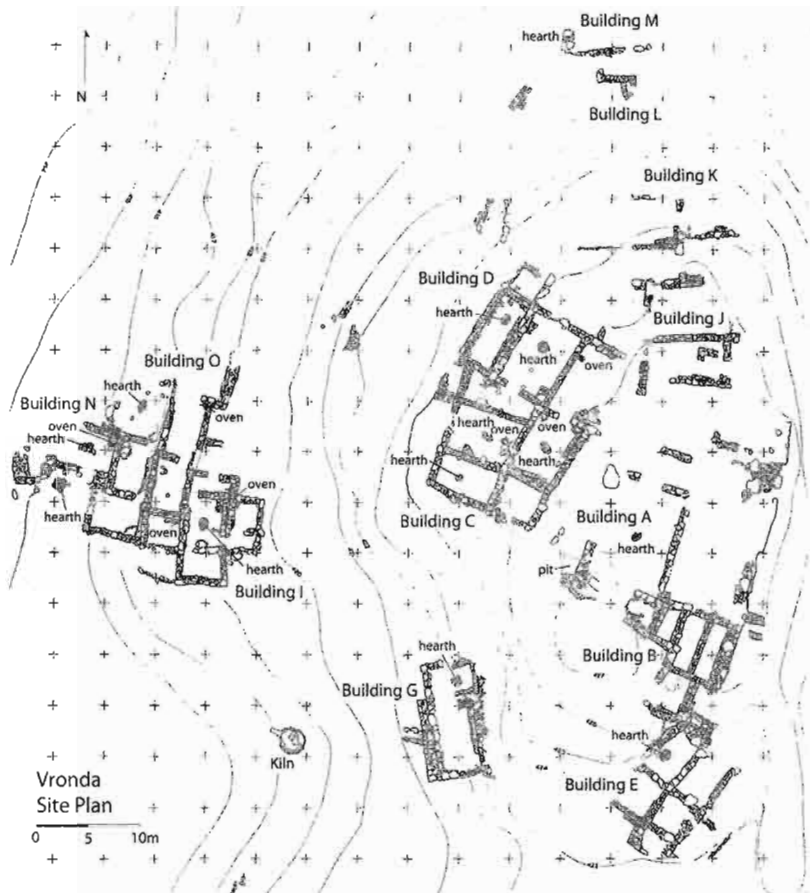


Figure 7.5 Site plan of Vronda, showing the location of house clusters, twelfth and eleventh centuries BC (after Glowacki 2007:figure 14:1).

analysis of four additional building clusters on the site (Buildings C-D, E, J-K, and L-M), despite their more fragmentary state of preservation, suggests a conformance to the same basic arrangement evident in Building I-O-N,³ with each cluster being composed of two or more suites of rooms (Glowacki 2002:38, 42, 2004:134, 2007:134–135, 136–137).

Even though great strides have been made in the study and reconstruction of domestic groupings on the basis of archaeological and ethnographic evidence in other parts of the world in recent decades (e.g., Allison 1999; Johnston and Gonlin 1998; Samson 1990; Yanagisako 1979), the definition and identification of such basic features as “family,” “house,” and “household” are much less developed for Early Iron Age Crete, in large part because of the paucity of relevant remains from across the island. Nevertheless, despite the small sample size, the extant evidence from across the island (e.g., Coulson 1998; Haggis et al. 1997; Hayden 1983; Mook 1998; Nowicki



Figure 7.6 Plan of Building I-O-N at Vronda, showing phases of construction, twelfth and eleventh centuries BC (after Glowacki 2007:figure 14:4).

2002:156–158, 161; Yasur-Landau 2003–2004, 2006) supports current scholarly opinion that the basic building block of Cretan society throughout the first half of the first millennium BC was the *oikos* unit (e.g., Day and Snyder 2004:78; Donlan 1985:299–300; Glowacki 2004:134; Small 1998:289; Nowicki 1999:147), a somewhat fluid entity comprised of an extended nuclear family (i.e., three generations) and its varied cadre of non-kin retainers.

Although the evidence is admittedly fragmentary, the remains at both Vronda and Azoria seem to confirm this pattern. At the former, the best example is provided by Building I-O-N, where the recurrence of repetitive suites of artifact types and the duplication of fixed installations such as hearths and ovens throughout its various component parts has led Glowacki to argue that each suite of rooms was

occupied by a single, nuclear family – in other words, an *oikos* unit (Glowacki 2002:46, 2004:129, 2007:133–134). Similarly, at Azoria, the repetition of formal and functional areas in each of the excavated domestic structures across the settlement has led the excavators to suggest that each axial unit served to house an individual *oikos* unit (Azoria V:484–485). On one level, then, the evidence from Vronda and Azoria reveals that the individual family, embodied in the basic axial unit, continued to play a dominant role in the social, political, and physical fabric of Cretan settlements throughout the first half of the first millennium BC.

At the same time, however, the widespread building program undertaken on the hilltops at Azoria toward the end of the seventh century BC ushered in several significant structural changes that both reflected, and perhaps served as a catalyst for, corresponding changes in the position of the family within the new urban environment. Most obvious, perhaps, is the increase in the size of the basic axial unit: the footprint of the largest house at Vronda (N2-N3-N5) measures roughly 82.9 m² (Glowacki 2007:135, 2012:134–135, 2013 personal communication), while that of the Northeast Building (A300, A400, A1700, A2300) covers an area of approximately 144 m². Moreover, if the area covered by the two courtyards, A500 and A1800, and the associated kitchen, A2100, were included in this measurement (totaling approximately 260 m²), the size of the Northeast Building would even exceed that calculated for the so-called Big Man's house, Building A/B, at Vronda (approximately 198 m²; Day et al. 2009:26–27; Glowacki 2007:135, 2013 personal communication). Associated with this increase in the size of the houses at Azoria is a corresponding escalation in the absolute wealth of at least some of its inhabitants, a phenomenon marked not only by the extensive provisions for the storage and production of agricultural goods, but also the expansion of household property and membership reflected in the addition of non-adjacent structures (e.g., A2100) and intervening spaces to the basic axial unit. Just as, if not more, significant, however, was the resulting physical and symbolic change in the distribution of houses across the settlement. At Vronda, Glowacki has reasonably concluded that the larger clusters of room suites across the settlement (i.e., Buildings A-B, C-D, E, G, I-O-N, J-K, and L-M) were occupied by extended family groups (i.e., groups of related families), with each appended suite of rooms representing the appearance of a newly spawned *oikos* unit. The resulting agglomerations likely reflect the underlying importance of kinship-based

associations in the definition of social and political identity in the early Iron Age (Glowacki 2002:38, 42, 2004:134, 2007:134–135, 136–137). At Azoria, on the other hand, the distribution of axial (i.e., family) units in more disparate and isolated fashion across the hilltops and the absence of any evidence for their subsequent expansion over the course of five or six generations of occupation at the site suggests a weakening of these more traditional affiliations and the emergence of the individual family as a more independent entity within the community. What appears to have emerged with the urbanization of the landscape in the seventh and sixth centuries BC was less a change in the internal nature of the individual family, but rather a transformation in the manner in which it advertised its position within the sociopolitical fabric of the new urban environment. Although kinship relations continued to play an important role in negotiating power relationships within the community, and indeed while the house continued to serve as a significant vehicle for the advertisement of wealth and status,⁴ it was now the position of the family within the larger *polis* landscape, rather than its juxtaposition to previous or contemporary generations, that afforded the highest levels of rank and prestige (cf. Westgate 2007b).

THE CIVIC LANDSCAPE

Coinciding with and serving as a prime catalyst for this redefinition of the sociopolitical position of the individual household unit within the larger urban community was a dramatic change in settlement pattern that took place at the end of the seventh century BC in the Kavousi region (Haggis 1993, 1996, 2001, 2005). Intensive survey in the area has demonstrated that whereas the Early Iron Age landscape was dotted by a series of small, agricultural villages organized into regional clusters reflecting larger kinship groupings, by the beginning of the Archaic Period, the majority of these rural settlements had been partially or entirely abandoned as their inhabitants flooded into the new urban center at Azoria. This nucleation of disparate population groups, a phenomenon that has also been noted for other areas of the island during this period (Wallace 2003b:256–262), necessitated a dramatic reorganization of the sociopolitical and economic relationships within the nascent community. In the process, the traditional kinship groups of the preceding era coalesced into a single, political entity.

Throughout Greek history, one of the primary means of negotiating social and political status between and among the various competing factions within a community was through the performance of ritualized dining and drinking activities (e.g., Murray 1983, 1990; Lissarrague 1991; Lynch 2007; Topper 2009; Wright 2004). Such rituals provide opportunities not only to forge and negotiate inter- and intragroup relationships through the sharing of food and drink and the exchange of information in institutionalized settings, but also to establish and reinforce social and political inequalities through the display, exchange, and consumption of superior resources (Arnold 1999; Dietler 1990, 1996, 1999; Dietler and Hayden 2001; Joffe 1998). The emphasis on the main hall, the proximity of the storeroom with its richly decorated pithoi, and the prevalence of vessels intended for the production and consumption of foodstuffs in the Archaic houses at Azoria illustrate the importance of such activities operating at the household level in the new urban environment of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. A similar focus on the hearth, the oven, and the processing of foodstuffs at Vronda indicates a corresponding emphasis on household dining and drinking activities during the twelfth and eleventh centuries BC.

There is also evidence for the performance of more complex rituals involving participants drawn from beyond the individual household or kinship group at Vronda. Building A/B (Figure 7.4; Day et al. 2009:48–63; Day and Snyder 2004; Glowacki 2002:38–39, 2007:135–136), situated on the eastern slope of the hill at its highest point, assumed the form of a large, rectangular room with a central hearth (Building A) flanked to the north by a narrower room, perhaps a storeroom, and to the south by an open court. A second suite of four small, doorless rooms bordering the court to the east (Building B) and containing numerous pithoi, cooking vessels, and drinking cups, has been interpreted as storage magazines. Externally, a long, megalithic terrace wall provided a monumental façade to viewers from the east. The size and elaboration of the architecture of Building A/B, together with the quantity and quality of its contents, led Day and Snyder to identify it as the house of the local ruler, who may have sponsored communal dining and drinking activities at his own expense in order to forge and reinforce social and political ties among the various members of the community (Day and Snyder 2004:73, 78).

At Azoria, too, there is clear evidence for the performance of similarly elaborate rituals attended by a wider cross-section of the

Azoria
Andreion Complex

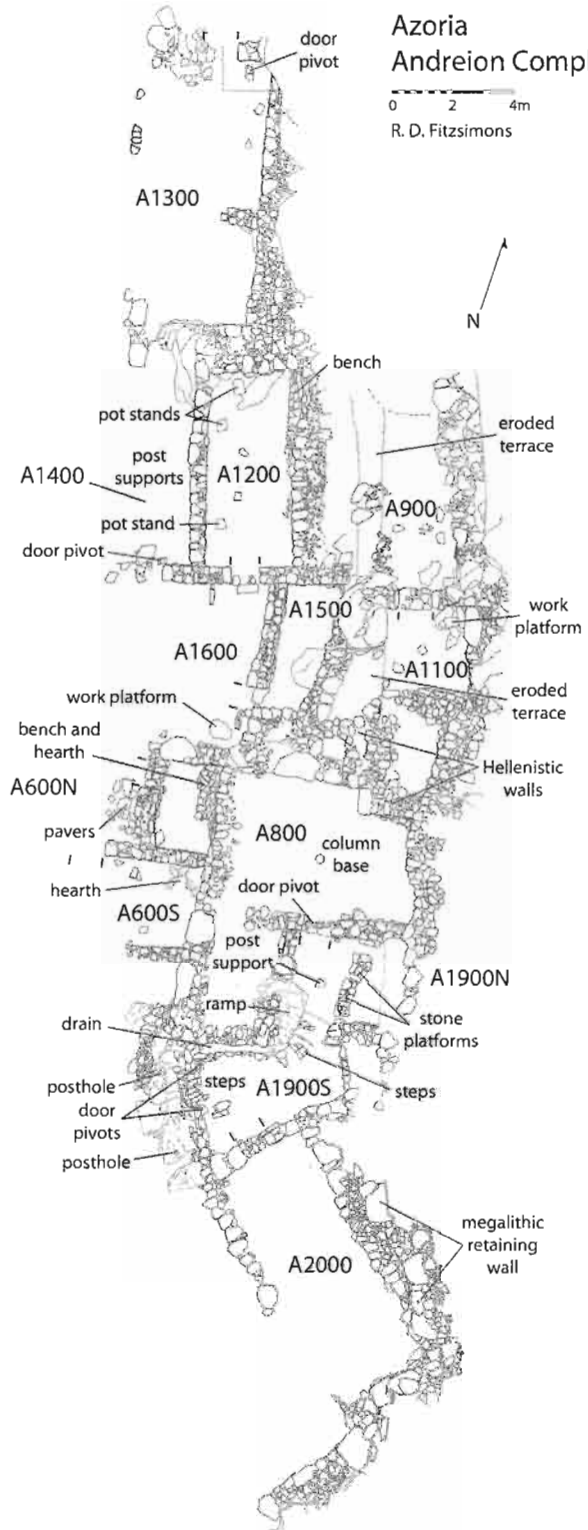


Figure 7.7 Plan of the Communal Dining Building at Azoria, late seventh/early sixth century BC (drawn by author).

community, although here the buildings in which they were enacted assumed a distinctly civic character. One such building (Figure 7.7), dubbed the Communal Dining Building, is a sprawling complex of at least ten rooms divided into two functional sections distributed across the upper two terraces of the West Acropolis, immediately below the summit (Azoria I:367–370, 373–390; Azoria II:253–265; Azoria IV:4–16). The rooms to the north were devoted to cooking (A600, A1600), the processing of wine (A1300), and the storage of foodstuffs (A1200, A1500, and perhaps A1400) and cooking and drinking vessels (A1500), whereas those to the south and east appear to have housed activities associated with dining and drinking (A800, A2000) and the display of prestige artifacts (A1900), including martial paraphernalia.

A second public facility (Figure 7.8) devoted, at least partially, to communal feasting was unearthed a short distance to the south and has been dubbed the Monumental Civic Building (Azoria II:295–301; Azoria IV:16–28, 39–41). This structure, which assumed the form of a huge trapezoidal chamber (D500) measuring 10 m in width and 20.5 m and 22.5 m long along its eastern and western sides respectively, was lined with two tiers of benches composed of hammer-dressed stones arranged along its southern, eastern, and northern walls. Substantial quantities of roofing material preserved along the eastern wall and two well-dressed post supports, as well as numerous outcroppings of roughly worked bedrock that would have functioned in a similar capacity, and traces of burnt beam impressions, indicate that the entire space, despite its immense size (ca. 200 m²) was roofed (Azoria II:298; Azoria IV:21–22). The main entrance to the building appears to have been located at the southern end of its western wall. Here, a handful of risers and a large schist slab bearing a massive pivot hole mark the position of a short staircase leading up to a double door. Although few complete vessels were recovered, copious amounts of food debris found atop the floor of the building suggest at least one of its functions was to house feasting and sacrificial activities. A second, smaller entrance cut through the north wall of this room granted access to a short corridor running along the top of a set of theatral-like seats (D1400) that lined the street below, which in turn opened onto an irregularly shaped kitchen (D1000) and a small, rectangular room (D900). This small room (D900) contained a central hearth abutting the north face of a stone altar that was found littered with ritual implements (Azoria IV:28–38). Also associated with

Azoria
Monumental Civic Complex

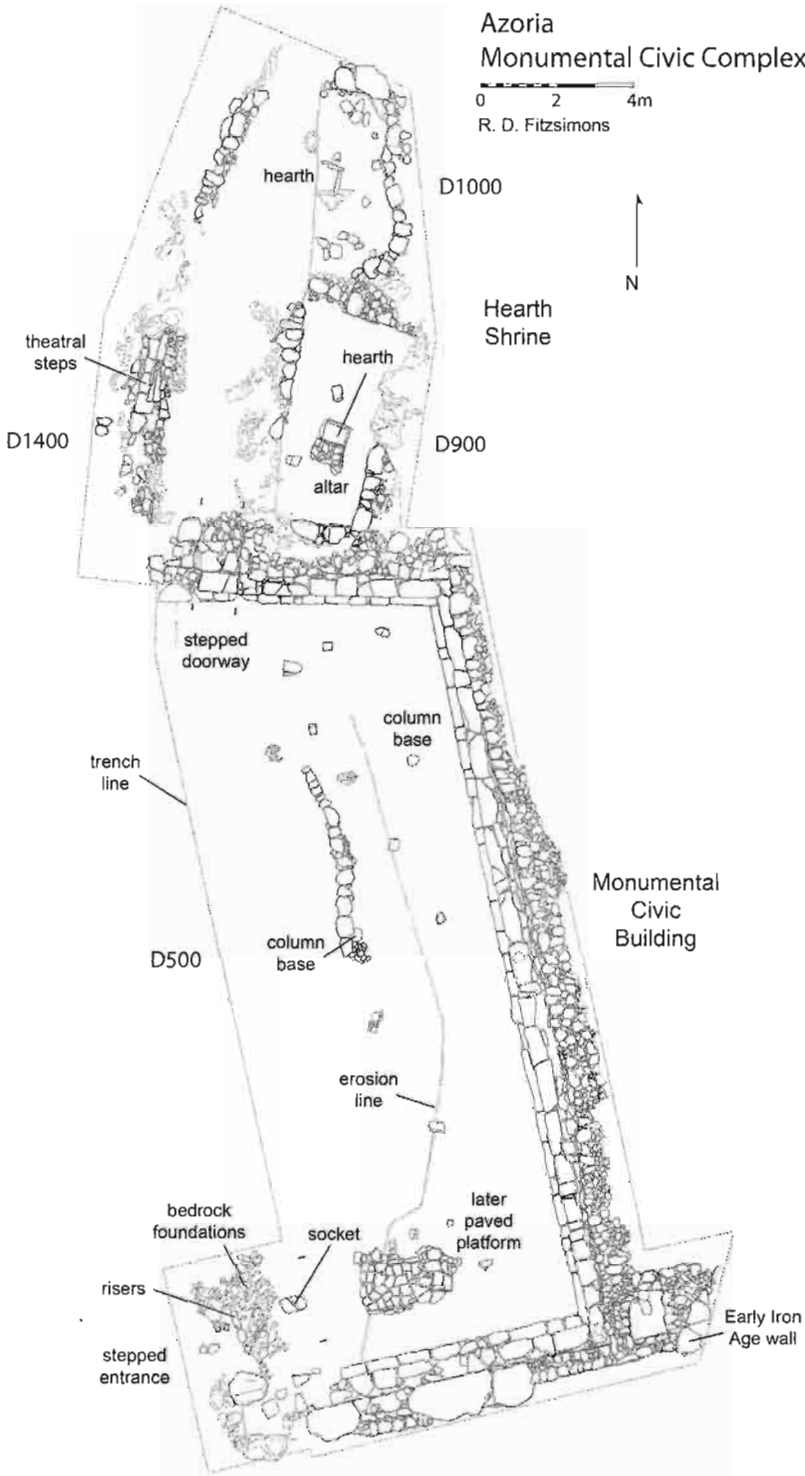


Figure 7.8 Plan of the Monumental Civic Building and the Archaic Hearth Shrine at Azoria, late seventh/early sixth century BC (drawn by author).

this complex was a suite of interconnecting rooms and open courts located a short distance to the south, which the excavators have identified as a Service Building (Azoria II:274–295; Azoria IV:43–62). Two large kitchens (B1500, B2200/2300) ran along the east side of an as yet unexcavated street connecting two open spaces (B1700, B3100) in which various activities, including food processing and perhaps textile manufacture (Azoria II:286, 288–289, 301; Azoria IV:43), took place. Both kitchens contained a rectangular hearth and multiple work platforms as well as numerous vessels for storage, dining, and drinking, whereas an adjoining room (B700) was devoted to the storage of foodstuffs and serving and processing equipment. An isolated room to the south of the south court (B3300) housed additional food processing activities, whereas two large rooms at the northern end of the complex were devoted to the production and storage of olive oil (D300).

The absence of both inscriptional evidence from Azoria and architectural comparanda from elsewhere on the island makes it impossible to determine the specific nomenclature applied to these complexes by the ancient inhabitants of the site. The evidence for the large-scale processing, storage, and consumption of food and the display of aristocratic artifacts in the first building (Figure 77) has led the excavators to suggest a possible identification as an *Andreion* Complex (Azoria I:380–382, 387–390, 391–393; Azoria II:253, 263–265; Azoria IV:4–16). This building type is known from literary and epigraphic sources to have housed such activities and to have acted as a forum for the competition for status by elite males (Azoria I:387–390; Azoria IV:4–6; Koehl 1997). Similar activities have also been ascribed to the Monumental Civic Building, where the presence of theatral-like seating designed for accommodating large-scale public gatherings and the intimate connection with the cult activities housed in the neighboring shrine building both find parallels in the formal and functional arrangement of the later city centers at Lato (Demargne 1903:216–221; Ducrey and Picard 1971, 1972; Miller 1978:78–86) and Dreros (Demargne and van Effenterre 1937:10–16; Marinatos 1936:254; Xanthoudides 1918).⁵ These features also recall the descriptions of the so-called *Prytaneion*, known from later historical and epigraphic sources (Miller 1978). Whether or not the inhabitants of the site referred to these structures as an *Andreion* and a *Prytaneion*, however, is less relevant than the fact that they housed the sorts of activities that would come to be ascribed to such complexes by later

authors (Azoria IV:4–6, 39–41). Indeed, the scale on which both of these structures were designed and constructed, the multiplicity of facilities devoted to the production, consumption, and storage of foodstuffs they housed, and the sheer volume of material unearthed within them makes it clear that they operated well above the level of the individual household, and instead belonged to the purview of the nascent civic authority.

Despite the functional similarities between these two complexes and the fact that they were both designed to accommodate public, or perhaps rather communal (Sjögren 2007:149–150), activities, they nevertheless appear to have been designed for somewhat different purposes and audiences. The relatively small size of the dining facilities in A2000, the measures taken to limit visual and physical access to its inner rooms through the creation of multiple doorways and circuitous routes of passage, and the emphasis on the display of elite artifacts in A1900 and A800 suggest that the gatherings housed in the Communal Dining Building were of a more restricted, intimate nature and it is tempting to associate them with commensal meetings attended and/or hosted by the traditional leaders and senior members of individual kinship associations. By contrast, the strikingly open design of the Monumental Civic Building, the extensive provisions for seating or standing arranged along its perimeter, and the expansive arrangement of associated facilities – that is, the Civic Shrine to the north and the Service Building to the south – arranged in a very unrestricted fashion along a major thoroughfare, indicate that this complex was designed to accommodate much larger gatherings of people in a much more public setting, and it is tempting to identify it as a sort of public assembly hall where citizens of the new *polis* would convene to discuss and deliberate social, political, and economic matters affecting the city-state as a whole.

THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

The emergence of new social and political bodies operating at the civic level also finds its expression in the overall plan of the settlement that, although lacking the symmetry of the so-called Hippodamian arrangement so characteristic of many contemporary colonies in Magna Graecia and later cities throughout the Aegean, nevertheless displays a marked degree of overall organization. Here, the cohesive element is not the orthogonal street plan, but rather the network of

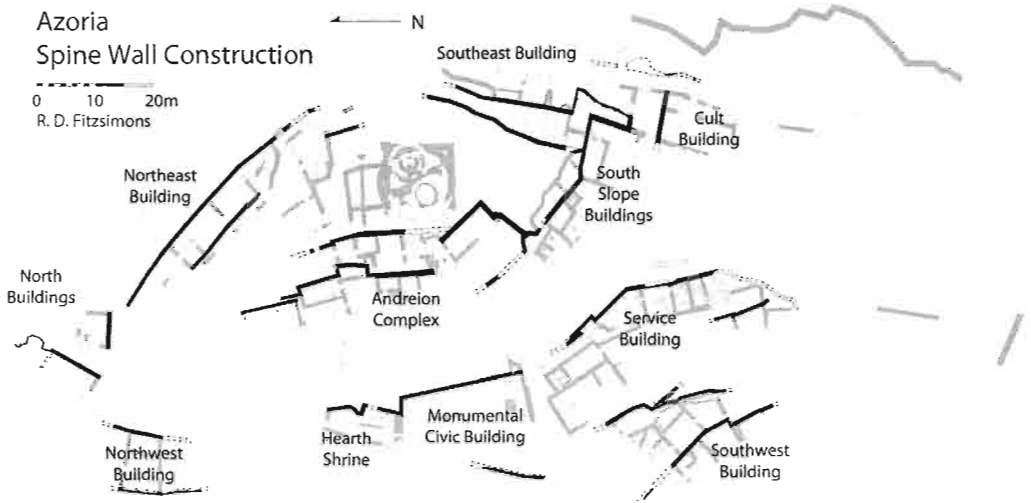


Figure 7.9 Site plan of Azoria, showing the network of spine walls, late seventh/early sixth century BC (drawn by author).

megalithic spine walls erected in roughly concentric fashion along the natural contours of both Acropolis hills (Figure 7.9; Azoria I:349–352; Azoria IV:2; Azoria V:432–434; for spine walls, see Fagerström 1988:113–114). These structures, characterized by the frequent use of massive, cyclopean boulders reaching upwards of 1 m in length along their maximum dimensions, served to retain the terraces on which the refashioned settlement was constructed, and thus acted as the armature around which the new urban landscape was fashioned (Figure 7.10).

Although no detailed energetics approaches comparable to the studies conducted by Abrams on the Maya have yet been applied to Early Iron Age Greece (Abrams 1989, 1994; Abrams and Bolland 1999), it seems unlikely that the volume of human and animal labor required for the successful completion of this undertaking could have been supplied by members of a single or limited number of kinship groups. Instead, it seems more reasonable to hypothesize that the creation of this new urban landscape could only have been achieved through the participation and cooperation of gangs of workmen drawn from the expanded population base of the newly coalesced community. Indeed, the ambitious nature of this building program and the extensive scale on which it was executed, as well as the absence of any substantial later modifications to it (Azoria IV:2; Azoria V:439, 477), would seem to provide clear indication of the existence of a communal authority operating far above the level



Figure 7.10. Photograph of Wall A602 from the south, showing typical spine wall construction, late seventh/early sixth century BC (photograph by author).

of the earlier family or extended kinship groups that would appear to have been responsible for the organization and execution of construction projects undertaken in the Early Iron Age. If this deduction is correct, it therefore follows that the widespread renovations undertaken to the hilltops at Azoria themselves indicate the corresponding emergence of some sort of civic administration capable of mobilizing, organizing, and directing quantities of human, capital, and symbolic resources on a scale not evident since the Mycenaean Age, one perhaps able to provide its own forms of compensation to its citizens (see Perlman 2004 for epigraphic evidence for various forms of state and non-state compensation in Archaic Crete).

More than acting as a mere passive reflection of the new socio-political order, however, the very creation of this urban landscape also played an active role in the restructuring of social and political networks within the community. It is likely that the construction of most private dwellings would still have been undertaken by individuals from the immediate family unit for whom they were originally erected, aided by various members of that particular family's extended kinship and social network (for ethnographic parallels, see Cameron 1999). In the process, some familial groups with access to superior resources may have assumed (a larger) responsibility for the creation of certain civic monuments or parts thereof as a means of reinforcing or enhancing their social and political status. On the other hand, the majority of the public building projects that

Azoria
Early Iron Age Remains

0 10 20m
R. D. Fitzsimons

← N

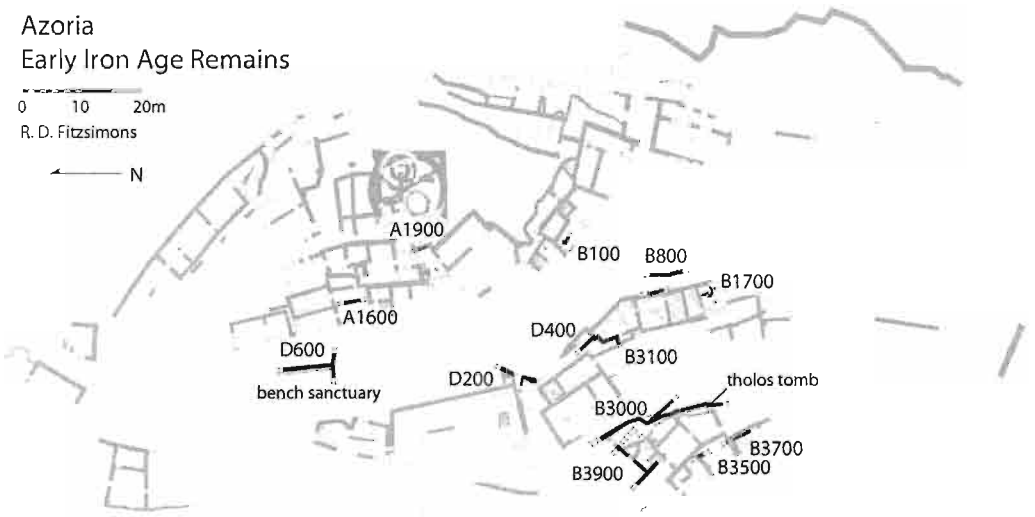


Figure 7.11 Plan of Azoria, showing the location of Early Iron Age architectural remains (drawn by author).

comprised the new urban landscape must have been the products of enterprises that assumed a much more communal character. Thus, for example, decisions regarding the course and layout of the spine wall system and the network of terraces it framed; the location and design of major civic structures such as the Cult Building (Azoria II:269–273, 301–302; Small 2010:201), the Communal Dining Building, and the Monumental Civic Building and its Service Building; and the allotment of land to private families for house construction, farming, and other economic activities must have arisen, at least in part, through the consensus and collaboration of community leaders. The collective nature of these building activities, with individuals from different kinship groups working side-by-side across the settlement for extended periods of time, would have served as one more cohesive mechanism that reinforced the notions of group membership and civic identity fostered by the new city-state by obscuring the more traditional kinship ties that had characterized the first few centuries of the first millennium BC. In this context, it is perhaps worth noting that large-scale public building projects often serve as effective vehicles for promoting group solidarity during times of social and political stress (Abrams 1989:62; Trigger 1990:127–128), a description that seems highly applicable to an era that witnessed both the widespread movement of population groups resulting in the nucleation of settlement at the site, the dissolution of long-standing social and political affiliations, and the institution of new

forms of kinship and civic relationships that would characterize the nascent *polis*.

Interestingly, this rearrangement of the traditional sociopolitical network and the creation of a new, more inclusive civic identity may have been further reinforced through the transformation of the physical landscape itself. Scattered traces of architecture dating to the Early Iron Age have been revealed in numerous places along the western slope of the South Acropolis (Figure 7.11; Azoria III:696–705; Azoria IV:45; Azoria V:432, 456–457, 461; Azoria VI), notably in the areas west of the northern rooms of the Communal Dining Building (Trench D600, the bench sanctuary), north (Trenches B3100, D200, and D400), east (Trench B800), and south (Trench B1700) of the Service Building, and north of, east of, and beneath the Southwest Building (Trenches B3000, B3500, B3700, and B3900). Even though these remains are preserved in too fragmentary a form to allow for a reliable reconstruction of their overall appearance, they nevertheless provide tantalizing evidence that the architectural landscape of the Early Iron Age settlement may have been intentionally obscured during the seventh and sixth century renovations undertaken at the site (Azoria III:701).

The clearest evidence for such activity can be seen in the area of the northern room of the Service Building (Figures 7.12–7.13; Trenches B2200/2300, 3100, and D400), where the course and position of the preexisting structural remains were not only ignored by the builders of the Archaic complex, but also obscured, perhaps deliberately, by the deposition of massive amounts of cobble fill that preceded the construction of the later complex. Similar deposits of cobble fill have been found in connection with a large number of structures, both private and public, erected across the settlement in the Archaic Period, including the Northeast Building (Azoria I:364), the Communal Dining Building (Azoria I:366, 370, 375; Azoria II:253, 265; Azoria IV:10), and the area south of the Monumental Civic Building (Azoria III:701). Although it is possible that these fills were laid for purely practical reasons – namely, to provide stable foundations and drainage for the new constructions – the ubiquitous nature of the cobbles, the massive amounts of labor required for their laying, and the fact that none of the preexisting walls were reused, raises the distinct possibility, if not likelihood, that the resulting disappearance of the Early Iron Age landscape was entirely intentional.

Azoria: Service Building
Early Iron Age Remains

0 1 2m
R. D. Fitzsimons
N

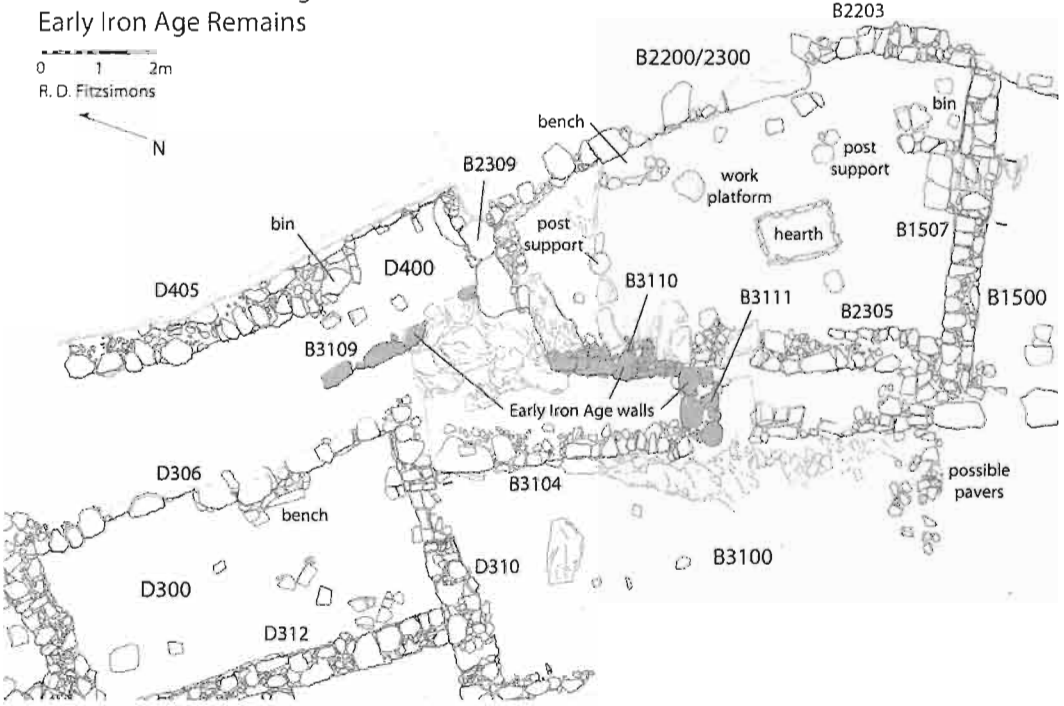


Figure 7.12 Plan of the northern end of the Service Building, showing the Early Iron Age and Archaic structural remains (drawn by author).

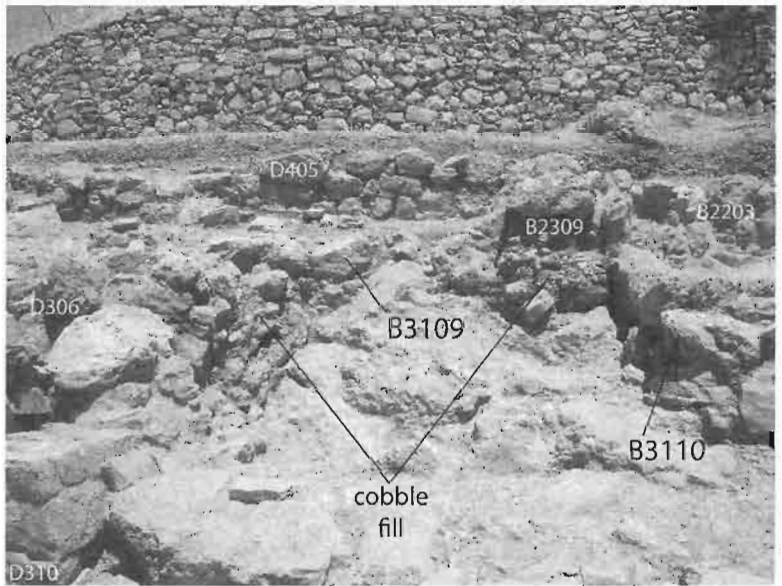


Figure 7.13 Photograph of the northern end of the Service Building, showing the Early Iron Age and Archaic structural remains (photograph by author).

Interestingly, this obfuscation of the preexisting architectural landscape differs markedly from the treatment afforded to the material possessions of its occupants. Indeed, the presence, for example, of the Late Minoan (LM) IIIc (twelfth century BC) pithos in the storeroom (B300) of the so-called East Corridor House (Azoria I:354), the Daedalic plaque in the kitchen of the North Acropolis Building (Azoria V:468), the Early Iron Age figurine from the south kitchen of the Service Complex (Azoria III:700–701), the Protogeometric krater in the north room of the Civic Shrine (Azoria IV: 36), and the handful of early figurines from its altar (Azoria IV:31–35), suggest an interest on the part of (at least) some individual families in preserving some of the material elements from earlier generations. Although some of these objects may well have been kept for purely practical purposes, in some cases at least (notably the ritual artifacts from the Hearth Shrine and its attendant storeroom), the likelihood is that they were intentionally preserved and displayed as heirlooms in an effort to maintain physical, symbolic, and emotional ties to the social environment of the immediate and more distant past (Azoria II:304; Azoria III:699, 708; Azoria IV:37; Lillios 1999).

If the residents of Azoria were in fact keeping heirlooms, it would appear that the dramatic sociopolitical changes that accompanied the process of urbanization at this site did not necessitate the total eradication of the entire social network that had operated in the region in the first few centuries of the first millennium BC, but rather, resulted in its removal (in architectural form) from the physical and visible realm of public spectacle. Interestingly, this situation appears to contrast with evidence elsewhere on the island, where the deliberate reuse of and reference to earlier settlement, cultic, and mortuary sites as a means of legitimizing and strengthening kinship structures and regional identities has been stressed (Azoria III:707–708; Prent 2003; Wallace 2003b). The setting of Early Iron Age shrines within, or in close proximity to, clearly visible Bronze Age remains at Ayia Triada and Kommos is a manifestation of this phenomenon (see Wallace 2003b:263–264 for references). The ambitious building program undertaken by the leaders of the new *polis* community at Azoria, which resulted in the deletion of the preexisting settlement plan, might therefore be understood as a deliberate initiative intended to eliminate the social and political relationships embodied in the preexisting built environment from the new corporate consciousness (Abrams 1989:62). In effect, then, the new urban

landscape created in the final decades of the seventh century BC operated not only as a physical expression of the nascent *polis*, but also as a social and ideological symbol of the sociopolitical transformations that had accompanied its appearance.

CONCLUSIONS

The factors that led to the abandonment of the hilltops at Azoria in the first quarter of the fifth century BC and prevented the immediate return of its inhabitants remain unidentified. Nevertheless, the fiery destruction that swept across the settlement shortly after their departure served to preserve in reasonably intact condition the structural and material environment that existed at the time of their exodus. Moreover, although there are clear indications that minor alterations were made to some of the buildings on the site prior to its final desertion, it is nevertheless the case that the original physical framework that was established during the dramatic reshuffling of population that transpired around the transition from the seventh to the sixth century BC survived relatively unchanged until the final demise of the settlement. As a result, the recent excavations at Azoria have yielded unparalleled insight into the archaeological correlates of state formation and urbanization as it unfolded on Crete at the beginning of the Archaic Period.

Analysis of the results from these excavations demonstrates that the urbanization of the landscape at Azoria was a complex, active process stemming from, and in turn encouraging, a series of deliberate and conscious decisions undertaken by, and ultimately affecting, a wide variety of different social and political levels throughout the community (Cowgill 2004:528). The effects of these decisions were not restricted to the tangible components of settlement, but rather encompassed a wide range of intangible elements as well, signaling the redefinition of preexisting sociopolitical and economic relationships between and within the various vertical and horizontal factions of the community, necessitating the creation and implementation of new mechanisms for negotiating standing and identity for and between citizens, and marking the emergence of the "civic" rather than the "kin" as the primary measure of status and prestige within the new urban environment. In effect, then, this transformational process resulted not only in the creation of a new physical and ideological landscape, but also – intimately connected with

its appearance – the destruction and obliteration of the preexisting settlement topography and the traditional social, political, and economic associations it had once embodied.

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NOTES

- 1 Two structures excavated on the southern slope of the South Acropolis, the so-called East and West Corridor Houses (Azoria I:352–363), were first identified as having belonged to a different type of house plan, one characterized by the presence of a corridor/storeroom running alongside a main hall (Azoria I:360–361; Haggis and Mook 2011). Recent reanalysis of the architectural, ceramic, and stratigraphic evidence from these buildings, however, suggests that this original interpretation may not be entirely accurate, although whether they conform to the same pattern of design exemplified by the Northeast Building is yet to be ascertained.
- 2 It is true that, to some extent, the form of the axial house is dictated by the fact that artificial terraces are required for construction because of the topography of many Cretan settlements. However, there are, as of yet, no indications that these axial units were constructed on adjacent terraces at Azoria, nor that any attempt was made to provide direct communication between terraces from within the houses – as was the case, for example, in the houses erected on the west slope of Lato (Demargne 1903:207–210).
- 3 Two complexes on the site, Buildings A-B and G, do not conform to the general pattern of house design discussed here. The former has been interpreted as the leader's house, and will be discussed in the context of the civic landscape below. The latter (Day 1997:400–403; Eliopoulos 2004; Klein 2004; Glowacki 2007:135, 137–138) belongs to a class of structure known as a bench sanctuary (Eliopoulos 2004; Klein and Glowacki 2009; Prent 2005:188–200, 616–617), an integral element in the architectural landscape of Early Iron Age Crete known from several sites in the immediate vicinity of Vronda, including Azoria, Halasmenos (Tsipopoulou 2001), Kephala Vasilikis (Eliopoulos 1998, 2004), and Pakhlitzani Agriadha (Alexiou 1965).
- 4 Of particular interest in this regard was the discovery of two pairs of agrimi (a wild or feral domestic goat on Crete, also known as the kri-kri) horn cores in rooms

- A400 and A1700 of the Northeast Building, which the excavators have interpreted as symbolic expressions of power (Azoria II:248). A collection of agrimi horns and cattle skulls in Building B at Vronda has been similarly interpreted as representations of elite male power (Day and Snyder 2004:69–71; Prent 2005:453).
- 5 Despite attempts to identify the complex of rooms south of the Geometric Temple at Dreros as a Prytaneion (Demargne and van Effenterre 1937:16–26; Miller 1978:93–98), two more likely candidates for such a structure at this site are provided by the so-called Agora (Demargne and van Effenterre 1937:10–16) and the building excavated by Xanthoudides (1918) on the Western Acropolis. Both of these structures are the subject of new excavations currently being conducted by Alexandre Farnoux of the French School of Archaeology in Athens.

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