

## Project Summary

This summer I was able to undertake two complementary archaeological and anthropological research projects with the support of a Stavros S. Niarchos Summer Research Grant; I both worked as a trench master on the excavation of a Final Neolithic-Ottoman site in Kavousi, East Crete, and investigated the role of local Cretans in the development of *archaeologies* on their island, both in those celebrated traditions of foreign institutions that first descended on the island at the opening of the twentieth century, and those other and equally rich traditions that have developed independently, often alongside the former. The way in which these archaeological traditions have influenced and informed each other in light of the social and cultural movements of the island, both in the past and now (especially since the turn of the twentieth century), was a primary focus, as well as ethnographic research through numerous discussions with villagers and excavation “workmen” who have lived within the space of archaeological activity on the island throughout their lives.

## Project Description

This summer, from May to August 2004, I was able to undertake two research projects made possible by the generous support of a Stavros Niarchos research grant. The first was continued excavation at the archaeological site of Azoria in the hills near the village of Kavousi, East Crete. This site represents an impressive time span, ranging from the Final Neolithic (ca. 4500-3100 B.C.) to the Ottoman period, with a peak in the Early Iron Age-Archaic period (1200-600 B.C.). This current phase of excavation was begun at Azoria in the summer of 2002, under the directorship of Dr. Donald Haggis (UNC Chapel Hill) and Dr. Margaret Mook (Iowa State), the first to follow the initial formal excavation of the site by Harriet Boyd at the turn of the century.

The aims of the Azoria excavation deal largely with the idea of *cultural landscape* at a pivotal moment in prehistory. The emergence of the Greek polis has long been a research focal point. The excavations at Azoria seek to contribute valuable information to this topic, approaching it from a multifaceted perspective, considering regional interaction, internal processes, socio-political, religious, and daily movements of the site’s former inhabitants and designers. The discovery in my final trench of the season of a likely *prytaneion*, or councilmen’s hall, was thus an especially exciting development. Further excavation in the area should elaborate our understanding of a space which is potentially of great significance in understanding this site’s, and Crete’s, early sociopolitical structure.

My second research project dealt with the unique construction of archaeological traditions and cultural histories in Crete from the opening of the twentieth century into the present. Crete was adopted as a center for Western archaeological research early in the Modern era of the discipline. Immediately after the Cretan civil war ended in the final years of the nineteenth century, the attentions of European archaeologists, much in the tradition begun with Heinrich Schliemann in the preceding decades<sup>1</sup>, turned to Crete, “the Promised Land of Aegean

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<sup>1</sup> Schliemann in fact visited Crete in the 1880’s in an effort to secure the site of Knossos as his last grand excavation; he wrote of this ambition in 1887 in a letter to a friend: “I should like to complete my life’s labours with a great work, the excavation of the age-old, prehistoric palace of the kings of Knossos in Crete”.

Research” (so proclaimed by David Hogarth, British excavator at a number of sites, including Zakros). Sir Arthur Evans’ work at Knossos, the excavations of Harriet Boyd (-Hawes) throughout East Crete, as well as the investigations of the French archaeologist André Joubin, the Italian Federico Halbherr, and the work of descendant generations of foreign researchers, have all received a great amount of attention in English, Greek, and American scholarship. Less represented in Western literature is the role that Cretans’ played in the formation both of these foreign disciplines and of local archaeological traditions. For examples, Joseph Hazzidakis, one of the founders of the “Philekpaideftikos Syllogos” in Iraklion, did an incredible amount both to nurture burgeoning archaeological discussion in the Greek community and to facilitate foreign excavations establishing themselves on the island.

The Cretan presence in the archaeology of the island is still strong. The National Archaeological Service oversees all foreign excavations and carries out many more independently. Workers for excavations are frequently members of the surrounding villages, thus incorporating the current life in the area within that of its past. While working at Azoria I was able to build relationships with a number of the workmen and workwoman who lived in the village, as well as other villagers who knew about the site mainly through word of mouth. For my research, I was able to conduct a number of interviews, usually in informal settings, concerning the roles that these figures currently played in the archaeology of the area and their resulting impressions, and also to hear, through their words and stories, how previous generations were involved in excavations there.

What developed was a realization that often, through independent consideration and activities, as well as through employment on foreign institutions’ excavations, separate “archaeologies”, that is traditions concerning the past of the island and its material/metaphysical legacy, have arisen on Crete through the experiences of the locals. These traditions predate the formalization of foreign research on the island, as was evidenced by the oral histories of ancestors’ identification and treatment of sites within a landscape that not only represented a past existence, but their present one. This unique duality, of a past interlaced with the present, continues today and provides a perspective that is unmatched in foreign research. It is indeed difficult to access through the classical investigative techniques of the Western discipline, and yet is incredibly enriching and valuable to any inquiry of this past.

And thus this anthropological project has been twofold: to both investigate the under-celebrated (in the Western tradition) identity of Cretans in the founding and development of the archaeological field of study on the island, and further to investigate the non-institutional and independent treatment of the past offered through the local perspective. Both ethnographic work, primarily in the villages surrounding the excavation site, and through exploration of the Cretan Historical Archives and the Cretan Ethnology Museum in Iraklion, provided excellent material for addressing these topics.

Both of my summer research projects were exceptionally rewarding, and would not have been possible without the generosity of the Stavros S. Niarchos Foundation.