# In Crete, an ancient city is uncovered

**Group Pink**



Two archaeology students sift through dirt and look for ancient artifacts at Azoria, a city that was destroyed by fire 2,500 years ago. The archaeological site is located on the island of Crete off mainland Greece. Photo: Rob Christensen/Raleigh News & Observer/MCT

KAVOUSI, Greece — In June, the digging once again began. Slowly but surely, an ancient city lost for thousands of years is being uncovered in Crete, an island off Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. .

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as*

*I read:*

Archaeologists — scientists who study ancient civilizations — and American students were at the dig. They were there in hopes of discovering clues about life in the city of Azoria. The ancient Cretan city was destroyed by fire about 2,500 years ago, and very little is known about it now.

Bits of writing have been found on pottery at the dig. While interesting to see, the writing isn't much help. The language of Azoria has yet to be figured out. Because of this, clues must be gathered from parts of buildings, objects like pots, tools and food.

The project is the life’s work of archaeologist Donald Haggis.

**Finding Ancient Pottery**

Digging is only allowed for six weeks a year, but Haggis has been at it since 2002. Much work has already been done.

Today on the hilltop, there are a couple of dozen students, archaeologists and Greek workers. They are busy digging around the remains of several buildings.

“It’s fun whacking away,” joked student Chelsea Bright, who plans to become an archaeologist. “It’s like you’re a lumberjack.”

So far, several houses and public buildings have been unearthed. Haggis serves as leader, directing the digging.

Azoria was first discovered in 1900, but wasn't considered very important. As a result, no one paid much attention to it for years.

But in 1988, Haggis decided that Azoria might be worth a closer look.

What gave Haggis that idea was some Azorian pottery he and fellow archaeologist Margaret Mook discovered. The pottery convinced them that the city was much older than previously believed. They concluded that Azoria would be worth studying.

“This just thrilled us,” Haggis said when they found the old pots. “Always in the back of my mind I was to dig there.”

**Dining Rooms And Storerooms**

Azoria was a small city, with a population of 2,000 to 5,000 people.

There had been settlements on the mountaintop of Azoria for centuries. However, a full-blown city did not develop until around 630 B.C.

Around 480 B.C., the city was destroyed by a terrible fire, probably set by invaders. Eventually, it became lost in time. Today it reveals what a Cretan city looked like during the Archaic Period of 900 to 500 B.C.

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as*

*I read:*

Among the discoveries made so far is a building where shared public meals were probably eaten. The building includes dining rooms and kitchens. Storerooms contain what's left of ancient grapes, olives and grains.

The dig has also uncovered what is called the Monumental Civic Building. Primarily a large hall, this building has a stepped bench built into its walls. A two-room shrine — a sort of small temple — was built off of the hall.

It is the first time, said Haggis, that two large public buildings of the period have been unearthed. They suggest that many of the men ate together — perhaps because all of them were soldiers.

**An Exciting Experience**

Each year, American students — most of them future archaeologists — come to the dig at Azoria. This summer, 42 of them are here.

The work the students do is physically demanding. The sun gets very hot, and they end up covered with dirt.

The students start work at 7 a.m. and finish by midafternoon, when the sun becomes unbearable. However, the more experienced students, known as trench masters, work late into the afternoon to record the day’s findings.

Most students find the work very difficult — but some take to it.

“I love the history and the experience," said student Julie Juhasz. Also, she added, "there is something satisfying about swinging a huge pick.”

For those working at the dig, uncovering the past is an exciting experience. Juhasz found that out when she discovered a pot.

“It’s like a connection with someone who died 3,000 years ago,” Juhasz said.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. Who is heading the dig at the site at Azoria?

A. Chelsea Bright

B. Donald Haggis

C. Julie Juhasz

D. Margaret Mook

2. When was the city of Azoria destroyed?

A. 480 B.C.

B. 630 B.C.

C. 500 B.C.

D. 900 B.C.

3. All of the following have been involved with the dig at Azoria EXCEPT:

A. American students

B. American workers

C. Greek workers

D. archaeologists

4. Select the sentence that suggests that digging at Azoria is physically demanding.

A. "It's like you're a lumberjack."

B. So far, several houses and public buildings have been unearthed.

C. The students start work at 7 a.m. and finish by mid-afternoon, when the sun becomes unbearable.

D. However, the more experienced students, known as trench masters, work late into the afternoon to record the day's findings.