

## British Excavations at Souskiou-Laona Settlement, 2009

By Edgar Peltenburg

A fifth season of Lemba Archaeological Research Centre and University of Edinburgh investigations at the Chalcolithic settlement of Souskiou-Laona was conducted for 4 weeks in April-May 2009 under the directorship of Edgar Peltenburg.

Last season, we reported the discovery of a fifth cemetery on the West Ridge of Laona, but further investigations this season failed to recover human bones from the pits shaped like graves and so Chalcolithic people may have used them and other features on this prominence for other purposes<sup>1</sup>. In 2009 we were also able to show that buildings discovered in 2008 were not isolated units on the West Ridge but that they comprised a substantial part of the settlement. At least five buildings, including three forming an integrated linear arrangement, are securely identified. All five structures stood in a single row along a lengthy terrace, so forming a contoured strip of housing on the upper south slope of the ridge. Since rubbers and other heavy implements occur above this strip, further housing may once have existed in parallel rows. These substantial additions to the Laona population suggest that it may have been sufficiently large to account for all the individuals in the cemeteries. More detailed chronological analysis of settlement and cemeteries is required since three radiocarbon dates from Operation B attest to a lengthier Middle Chalcolithic occupation than previously suspected. They indicate that settlement persisted well into the earlier 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium calBC.

Removal of slopewash last season led to the discovery a sequence of some four superimposed structures in East Ridge Operation A. One of these, B 1015, may have re-used part of an earlier wall (Fig. 1). An intact assemblage on its floor includes several stone objects, amongst them an exceptional sub-rectangular stone bowl with side socket. Ceramics belong to what increasingly seems like an earlier phase of the Middle Chalcolithic. Immediately outside the re-used wall lay a unique ceramic rosette with central perforation, possibly an inlay or applique (Fig. 2).

Inhabitants also left a wide spectrum of usable goods on the floor of nearby B 920. Systematic microstratigraphic and phosphate sampling was carried out here.

As on the West Ridge, it is clear that inhabitants of the East Ridge cleared soil cover (if it existed) to make extensive use of the natural limestone bedrock. These clearances may have caused erosion on the steeper slopes which led to the tumble of tabular limestone blocks into the housing area. Such blocks supported a terrace that created two occupational zones arranged in upper and lower terraces in Operation B. Buildings 920 and 1015 lay in the lower terrace where, cut into the bedrock, were a closely associated firepit, oven and fireplace, the last containing many faunal remains, all surrounded by artefact-rich midden deposits. These open air cooking arrangements preceded all built structures. According to this sequence, it seems evident that the Laona settlement initially evolved from temporary camping activities.

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<sup>1</sup> For the location of ridges and Operations, see Edgar Peltenburg, Diane Bolger, Mark Kincey, Andrew McCarthy, Carole McCartney and David A. Sewell, Investigations at Souskiou-Laona settlement, Dhiairizos Valley, 2005, *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* 2006: 79, Fig. 2.