

British Excavations at Souskiou-Laona Settlement

By Edgar Peltenburg

Investigations at Souskiou-Laona under the directorship of Edgar Peltenburg, Lemba Archaeological Research Centre/University of Edinburgh, were carried out for 4 weeks in August and September 2005. The investigation of the Middle Chalcolithic (MChal) settlement, c. 3000 BC, comprises the project's next phase of research at this exceptional 600 x 1000 m. complex of prehistoric activities inland from Palaepaphos in south-western Cyprus. Related work on the associated Laona cemetery is reported elsewhere¹.

The settlement component of the complex lies on a prominent ridge between the Vathyrkakas and Dhiarizos rivers, with traces especially evident on its south slope and north-east spine. We believed it worth excavation since trial trenches in 1992 demonstrated the existence of partly intact remains on less steep gradients of the site². Initial intensive survey showed that the site was larger than previously determined, extending some 500 m along the ridge to the south-west spur.

Two main areas were opened, in addition to several smaller trials. The 173m² exposure yielded parts of three curvilinear buildings and other walls, with prolific numbers of objects, many of them in caches. Ground stone includes such recognisable types as adzes (23), axes (40), hammerstones (23), pestles (34) and rubbers and querns (40), but by far the most numerous were expedient, not readily classified tools (68). MChal pottery was badly broken and awaits conservation.

Amongst the finds were some 32 picrolite wasters. From discrete areas of the site, they indicate localised production in all probability of the famous cruciform figurines which abound in the nearby and contemporary cemeteries. Not all finished products were taken to the cemeteries, since figurines (6) and dentalia (20), which are characteristic MChal grave goods, were also found here. There seems to be some relationship between settlement activity and explicitly mortuary ritual. Twice in Building 34 objects like those in the tombs were found together, but without burials. In one instance a remarkable cruciform with bisected arms (Fig. 1) co-occurred with 7 dentalia and 2 large blades, a distinctive funerary assemblage. In the other, a figurine was found with shell and unique spiraliform copper ornament (Fig. 2). These outstanding objects and their contexts confirm the special status of the settlement, and the desirability of further investigation.

¹ Lindy Crewe, Kirsi Lorentz, Edgar Peltenburg and Sorina Spanou, *Treatments of the dead: Preliminary report of investigations at Souskiou-Laona chalcolithic cemetery, 2001-2004.* RDAC in press.

² Edgar Peltenburg, *Souskiou-Laona*, in D. Christou, *Chronique des fouilles..... à Chypre en 1992*, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 117, 1993, 730-2.