

British Excavations at Souskiou-Laona Settlement, 2010

By Edgar Peltenburg

A joint Lemba Archaeological Research Centre – University of Edinburgh under the directorship of Edgar Peltenburg conducted a sixth season of investigations at the Chalcolithic settlement of Souskiou-Laona for four weeks in April-May 2010.

We concluded investigations of material from a picrolite sculptor's workplace in Operation D, located on the West Ridge of the site. Trench 30, some 10m below the crest on the southern face of the ridge, was extended to an area of just over 13 sq m. We continued to recover unusually high quantities of picrolite wasters, and other associated objects that indicate a wider suite of functions. There are some seven dentalia here, mainly offcuts. This number is relatively high in terms of excavated soil volume at Souskiou, suggesting that craft activity here embraced different media for body ornaments, not just picrolites. In addition to unusual stone objects, perhaps artisans' tools, there are items typical of domestic contexts – rubbers, chisels, hammerstone/grinder – ones that imply that crafts existed within domestic contexts.

The next phase of Trench 30 research entails the analysis of this assemblage. None of it is *in situ*, though for topographical reasons it can only have come from a very restricted area. Chronology will merit special scrutiny since amongst the ostensibly Middle Chalcolithic material comes a conical grooved stone, identical with others that only appear in the Late Chalcolithic at western sites.

Operation A on the slope of the East Ridge contains the best preserved stratigraphic sequence. There is evidence for an upper and lower terrace here with a single structure overlooking a row of smaller buildings. We have now excavated almost all these structures, at least two of which, Buildings 13 and 920, were founded concentrically over circular artificial hollows indicative of pit – building occupational sequences. Beneath the lowest structures lies an extensive midden with occasional fireplaces. Prolific animal bone, fire-cracked stones, ceramics, charcoal and objects such as bone needles which are rare or absent in the buildings are furnishing significant information on subsistence and other economic aspects. The major part of this early midden will be excavated in a future season.

Dr. Kirsi Lorentz (STARC) and her team continue the analysis of the human bone stacks from tombs in Operation C, the Laona cemetery. Small objects are occasionally recovered from the multitude of bones during this research. One of these, a unique pendant, is from Tomb 159, an intact facility according to Dr. Lindy Crewe (University of Manchester) who is analysing the cemetery. Made of bone and only 1.3 cm in height, it is finely wrought with central ring and opposed extensions, one a trapezoid perforated for suspension, the other with two splayed, broken elements. The ring with extensions may be a precursor for shell rings that are popular in the Late Chalcolithic and Philia.