

## **British Excavations at Souskiou-Laona Settlement, 2007**

*By Edgar Peltenburg*

A third season of investigations at Souskiou-Laona under the directorship of Edgar Peltenburg, Lemba Archaeological Research Centre/University of Edinburgh, was carried out for 4 weeks in March-April 2007. The site of Souskiou, near Palaepaphos, is famous for the earliest cemeteries in Cyprus, belonging to c. 3000 BC, well before they became standard from the Bronze Age to the present. Results of initial excavations of this project are reported separately.<sup>1</sup>

The settlement is located on a hillside, and this season we were able to demonstrate how Chalcolithic peoples placed rows of structures on extended terraces rather than individually on discrete platforms. Contrary to common belief, the remains were well preserved on the protected inner side of these terraces, and occasionally more extensively. One of the latter, Building 604 on the lower plateau, provides detailed evidence on house planning, with a central depressed floor blackened and reddened by material from a circular platform hearth, surrounded by a wide bench with stone skirting, presumably used for work and sleep (Fig. 1). The curvilinear plan is well-known in Chalcolithic Cyprus, but for unknown reasons the bench does not seem concentric with the wall plan.

Graves were recovered for the first time in the settlement, so raising questions about mortuary practices in which decisions were made for cemetery and intra-mural burial. Three children and an adult were placed in pits in Building 648 on the top of the hill (Fig. 2). It is distinguished by its elegant masonry, unique use of tabular limestone in carefully laid courses, the cleanliness of its interior, an unusual feature of Chalcolithic buildings, and these burials. The children were interred during the life of the building, the adult in a post-abandonment pit filled with large stones. His head projected beyond a covering of flagstones that had been placed directly on his torso. Since the skull remained in good condition, the stones of the pit fill must have been carefully inserted.

Systematic survey continued to recover information on the organisation of picrolite carving of cruciform figurines and pendants presumably destined for the adjacent cemeteries. The waste material from the manufacture of these items was distributed throughout the settlement, indicating widespread production among the inhabitants rather than specialised working in a workshop or quarter. The occurrence of more slabs of raw material indicates that, in addition to obtaining suitable pebbles from the Kouris R., picrolite was extracted from seams in the serpentinite. Increased intensity of consumption at Souskiou, therefore, may have prompted the search for and quarrying of larger pieces than supplied by the usual riverbed source.



Fig. 1 Building 604 showing contrast between cleaned stone-fronted bench and ash-rich depression around hearth. 2 m ranging pole.



Fig. 2 Graves 805 and 813 inside wall of Building 648 on the crown of the ridge. 50 cm scale.

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<sup>1</sup> Edgar Peltenburg, Diane Bolger, Mark Kincey, Andrew McCarthy, Carole McCartney and David A. Sewell, Investigations at Souskiou-Laona settlement, Dhiarizos Valley, 2005, *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* 2006: 77-105.