

PRESS RELEASE
EXCAVATIONS AT POLITIKO-TROULLIA, 2014

The Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Communications and Works, announces the completion of the 2014 archaeological investigations at the Bronze Age (ca. 2000-1500 B.C.) site of Politiko-Troullia, conducted under the direction of Dr. Steven Falconer and Dr. Patricia Fall of La Trobe University. Politiko-Troullia is situated approximately 25 km southwest of Nicosia near Ayios Irakleidos Monastery in the copper-bearing foothills of the Troodos Mountains.

The 2014 investigations expanded and deepened the excavations at Politiko-Troullia that was the predecessor of ancient Tamassos, the seat of a centrally important kingdom during the subsequent Iron Age. These excavations brought to light two large courtyards that were the scene of communal feasting during the Bronze Age that featured abundant consumption of sheep, goat and (most intriguingly) large numbers of hunted Mesopotamian fallow deer. Excavated animal bones and antlers indicate that entire deer carcasses were brought to Politiko-Troullia for slaughtering. In conjunction with the evidence of forest-dwelling deer, analysis of excavated charcoal fragments using a Scanning Electron Microscope indicates that the hills surrounding Politiko-Troullia would have been covered with pine woodlands.

The courtyards at Politiko-Troullia lay adjacent to a lengthy alleyway, which was paved with layer upon layer of broken potshards, animal bones and other debris discarded by Politiko-Troullia's inhabitants. The southern courtyard has revealed the two most striking artifacts from recent excavations: a carved limestone plank figure standing about 40 cm (excavated in 2011) and a hollow ceramic "askos" bird figurine (excavated in 2013). The stone plank figure seems to be representing a female, as indicated by an incised pubic triangle. Its highly abstract form is typical of Cypriot plank figurines, which are normally ceramic and much smaller. This stone plank figure is the only example excavated from a well-documented archaeological context anywhere on Cyprus. The askos figurine depicts a quail-like bird, missing only its head or spout. This find is particularly intriguing, since askos figurines are most commonly found in tomb deposits. The plank figure and askos are two components of several lines of evidence suggesting communal, perhaps commemorative behaviors in open public settings at the heart of this Bronze Age settlement.

Excavations in 2014 revealed domestic households at the northern end of the settlement associated with evidence of copper metallurgy. Similar evidence excavated in 2007 suggests that Bronze Age metallurgy was practiced on a household basis. Archaeological survey of the local landscape shows that the hills around Politiko-Troullia have been terraced and managed for centuries, perhaps beginning as early as the Bronze Age. Survey exploration during 2014 utilized Ground Penetrating Radar to explore for buried architecture over an area of about 20 hectares, which would suggest a population numbering potentially in the hundreds and perhaps thousands.

The archaeological deposits at Politiko-Troullia reach depths of up to four metres below the modern surface, making this one of the most deeply stratified sites on the island of Cyprus. The results from Politiko-Troullia open an archaeological window on the farming and mining communities that provided the foundation for urbanized civilization on Cyprus. Drs. Falconer and Fall are particularly grateful for the kind support, encouragement and friendship offered to their project by the people of Pera Orinis and Politiko, most especially by mayors Costas Miliotis and Andreas Voskaris, the teachers of Pera and Kambia schools, friends and colleagues in the Pera community.