

PRESS RELEASE
EXCAVATIONS AT ANCIENT IDALION: LYCOMING COLLEGE EXPEDITION

The Ministry of Communications and Works, Department of Antiquities, announces the completion of the 2010 season of excavation by the Lycoming College Expedition to Idalion, under the direction of Dr. Pamela Gaber.

The 7 week field work focused on the terrace of the East Acropolis, Mouti tou Arvili, and the re-opening of the excavations in the Adonis Temenos. With the removal of several years of accumulated rain wash extraordinary vessels were revealed sitting on what appeared to be the last use floor of the sacred precinct. These finds indicate that the temenos was in use until the first century BCE. The cluster of whole vessels on a floor covered with mud brick detritus may indicate that the sanctuary was abandoned in something of a hurry.

Of great interest was the discovery of the limits of the Hellenistic altar in the Adonis Temenos. As expected, the western corner of the southern edge of the altar was found approximately 8 meters west of the eastern corner. The huge size of this altar indicates the continuing importance of the cult of the consort of the Great Mother at Idalion in the Hellenistic period. Evidence of votive terracottas continued in the area of the altar.

In the area known as the "Sanctuary of the Paired Deities" the team continued to uncover the eastern area last used in the Roman period. It was discovered that, in addition to worshipping a pair of aniconic deities, a male and a female, ancient Cypriot worshippers donated numerous limestone votive figures.

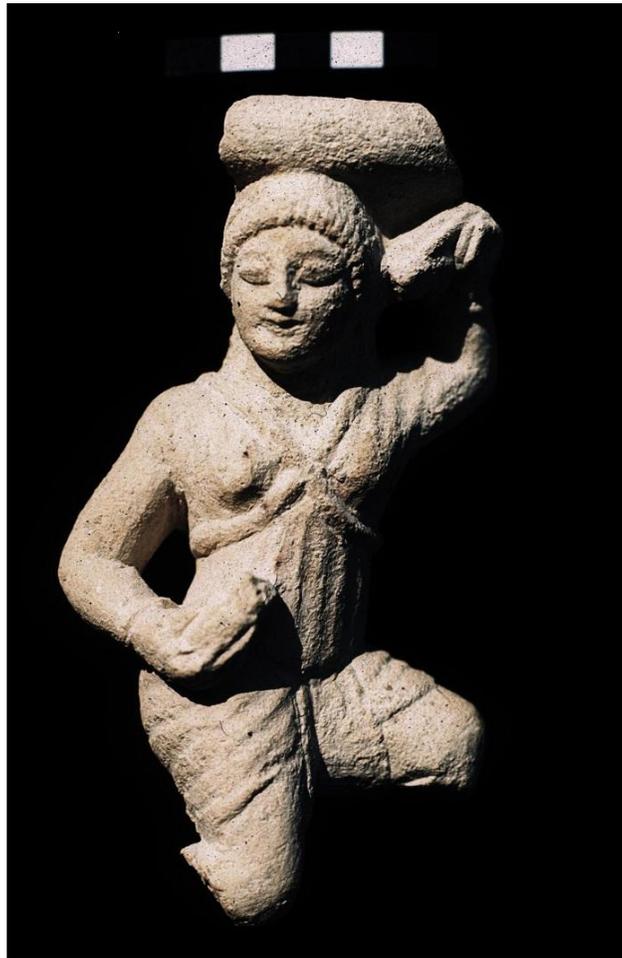
This season's work revealed more of the Roman installations in the Eastern portion of the sanctuary, including a large cistern or basin lined with hydraulic plaster. Very near this basin is an impressive set of massive, carefully hewn paving stones set in a line, possibly to mark a ceremonial pathway.

There is little doubt that this extremely ancient Temple, going back to the Cypro-Geometric period, was dedicated to the Great Goddess of Cyprus, the Wanassa, or "Mistress of Animals," sometimes represented as Artemis, and her consort who came to be called Adonis in later centuries. That he was known as the "Master of Animals" accounts for his representation sometimes as Herakles, sometimes as Pan. In fact, the ancient Cypriots borrowed religious symbols from many nations to represent their own native gods.

New to the Lycoming College Expedition this year was the Hellenistic industrial area to the East of the Lymbia Road. As this area lies directly down-slope from the Adonis Temenos, perhaps it is not surprising that numerous sculpture fragments were found there in the upper levels. These statuettes were clearly washed down from the sacred grove above. The former American expedition in the 1970's located the large plaster-lined basin associated with the architecture in this field. They suggested that it might be a bath complex, perhaps associated with a Roman villa or other Roman building. It seems however that the area indicates a major Hellenistic industrial installation, possibly for the processing of textiles. At each end of the basin, which measures

close to 6 m long by 2.7 m wide, there are depressions, apparently for the insertion of wooden rods, presumably for the rolling of cloth or wool through liquid for dyeing or producing felt

Next year the team plans to investigate the limits of the “Sanctuary of the Paired Deities”, to explore the Hellenistic industrial complex and to find the earlier levels of the Adonis Temenos.



Sculpture from ancient Idalion (Lycoming College Expedition)