

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES**

#### **AT IDALION-AMPILERI, 2012**

The Ministry of Communications and Works, Department of Antiquities, announces the completion of the 22th excavation season of the Department of Antiquities at the palatial complex on the hill of Ampileri, where the administrative center of the kingdom of Ancient Idalion was located. The excavations are being conducted since 1991, under the supervision of Dr. Maria Hadjicosti, Director of the Department of Antiquities, who was assisted by Mr. Stavros Lagos, Senior Technical Supervisor, and Mr. Kyriakos Kapitanis, who drafted the drawings. The 2012 excavation season, which lasted from March until the end of November 2012, was supervised by Dr. Anna Satraki, Archaeological officer of the Department of Antiquities, and archaeologist Charis Papadopoulou. Other Cypriot and foreign archaeologists, students, and volunteers worked for smaller periods at the excavation.

The excavation of 2012 revealed new imposing buildings, such as storerooms, workshops and water installations, which expand our knowledge concerning the use of the fortified building and support its characterization as an administrative center and palatial complex. Following the 2012 excavation season, the excavation now occupies an area of 5,525 square meters on the north and west terrace of the Ampileri hill. The extensive area of the excavation and the well-preserved architectural remains offer a new perspective for the development of the area into an archaeological park and for its connection to the Local Museum of Ancient Idalion, which was built within the archaeological site and has been open to the public since 2008.

The research of 2012 focused on the investigation of Courtyard B and of the two new building blocks, which lie to the South side of Road A and are attached to the inner Tower C. Courtyard B, which following the previous excavation seasons was characterized as Road D, is almost rectangular and 11 meters wide. It has an imposing entrance with features betraying a defensive character and it occupies the area between the west city wall and the two new building blocks to the south.

The two new adjoining building blocks, despite the fact that they comprise a single unit together with Tower C to which they are attached, lay on different levels and were used for different purposes. The first block on the lower level has a rectangular plan. Its outer walls, one meter wide, are imposing and very well-preserved. The block consists of four small rectangular Rooms (Room 20A, 20B, 39A, 39B) and a long-narrow Room with two parallel separating walls which create three individual spaces (Room 40A, B, C). Room

19, which served the needs of Road A, was a later addition. Strong traces of fire and indications of a second storey were found on the floors of all rooms. Traces of fire were also documented on the steps of the narrow entrance which communicates with Courtyard B. The moveable finds, which are mostly weapons and horseshoes, testify that the building was used by the garrison of tower C. Fragments of shields comparable to those of Salamis, demonstrate that the buildings adjoining both sides of Tower C were used by high ranking officials of the city of Idalion. The shields, had fallen from the upper storey of the buildings surrounding Tower C, like those which were excavated in 2010 in the well-preserved rooms of the south wing of Courtyard A.

The southern block is the larger one and is attached to the entire south side of the previous building and the south side of Tower C. Although excavations so far have not revealed the entire building, there are eight rooms (Room 36, 37, 40A, 40B, 42, 43, 44, 45), channels, a cistern (Room 22) and open air workshops. The inner space arrangement does not exhibit the same symmetry as the northern block and it is evident from the findings that these areas were workshops for metal working and for the production of bronze and iron objects. Room 36, in which large storage amphorae and a pithos were excavated, served the storage needs of nearby Tower C. Also, Rooms 37, 42, 44 and the area south of Room 22 were identified as the main workshops of the entire building complex. Remains of channels were excavated in Room 42 and in the east wall of Room 22, which was identified as a cistern supplying water to the entire complex, including Courtyard B. This building block communicates with Courtyard B, through the west entrance of Room 41B. At the southern part of Courtyard B, and at the area south of Room 22, an accumulation of slag and basins in situ also testify metal working. The finds associated with the cistern (Room 22 which was partially excavated by the Joint American Mission between the years 1971 and 1974) are noteworthy: they include large amounts of local and imported painted pottery, numerous pointed based amphorae of the Canaanite type and many animal, bird and fish bones.

The findings of 2012 coincide with the findings of the previous excavation seasons. They include pithoi found in situ, large and small storage amphorae of different types for the export and storage of products such as oil, wine and fish. Also, Attic pottery, metal weapons and tools, bronze sheets and other decorated parts of shields, coins, small quantities of stone statuettes and clay idols, stone tools and basins, which are associated with oil production and metal working, as well as inscriptions which represent the economic records of the Phoenician administration of the ancient town. Noteworthy are the limited quantities of painted pottery in the entire excavated area, the large quantities of slag in the southern part of the excavation and the huge number of inscriptions excavated in the central part of courtyard B and in the rooms of the southern building.

The Phoenician Archive, which is the most important finding of the Department of Antiquities' excavations at Idalion, counts so far a total of 733 inscriptions. According to preliminary statistics, which were prepared recently, there is a total of 702 Phoenician and 31 Cypro-Syllabic inscriptions. The majority of the inscriptions are written in black ink, and only few are incised on local marble or pottery sherds. As far as the material is concerned, there are 374 inscriptions on pottery sherds, 335 on local marble and 24 on unworked stones. Inscriptions were found throughout the excavation, but most of them were concentrated in specific areas: 219 inscriptions in Courtyard B, 159 in Room 10, 81 in Room 8, 58 in Room 6, 26 in Room 30, 22 in Room 1, and between 10 to 20 in five other spaces. The majority of the inscriptions are fragmentary, but a considerable number is complete.

As far as the architecture is concerned, the excavations of the last years have fully uncovered the plans of important buildings belonging to the fortified palatial complex, which occupies half of the north lower terrace and the entire west part of the Ampileri hill. It includes also the top of the hill, where part of the fortifications were excavated by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition in the 1930s. Based on the evidence, it is most probable, that the fortified complex, also occupied the central part of the hill of Ampileri. The excavated area includes the three following important complexes: a) three wings of rooms around Courtyard A at the center of the north terrace, b) the Olive Press situated at a lower level on the northwest terrace and c) the large building complex to the south, which includes Tower C and two attached blocks which communicate with Courtyard B. Between the Olive Press and the above building complexes, there is a windy road, which leads from the West Gate to Courtyards A and B. The walls of these buildings were wide enough to support an upper storey and in some rooms are very high. In Room 35 one wall is preserved up to the cement floor of the upper storey.

The monumentality of the buildings, the strictly defensive character of the fort, the available facilities for the storage of water and agriculture products, the large quantities of imported transport amphorae, the extensive workshop activities for the production of valuable products such as oil and metals and also the Archive of the Administration of the town, allow the identification of the building as being that of the administrative center of the Classical and the Early Hellenistic period and, therefore, as the Palace of ancient Idalion. Important remains of an earlier, also fortified building were excavated under the rooms of the north and the west wing of Courtyard A. The walls, which are built on the natural bedrock, are provisionally dated to the Cypro-Achaic period.

**Excavations at Idalion-Ampileri, 2012**

