The Ian Potter Museum of Art
The University of Melbourne

Media Release
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New light on prehistoric Nicosia: evidence from recent excavations

A visiting antiquities expert from Cyprus will deliver a free public lecture in Melbourne in conjunction with the exhibition, Ceramic art of ancient Cyprus: significant ceramic assemblages recovered from Bronze Age tombs, currently on display at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at University of Melbourne.

Dr Giorgos Georgiou, from the Department of Antiquities in Cyprus, will speak on recent excavations that have thrown new light on prehistoric Nicosia. The talk, on 10 July, titled New light on prehistoric Nicosia: evidence from recent excavations, will reveal new discoveries of historical significance relating to the exhibition.

Cyprus is well-known for the high quality, originality and exuberance of its ancient pottery, produced in large quantities for domestic and industrial purposes and for burial with the dead. The Ian Potter Museum of Art at University of Melbourne holds an extensive range of this period of ancient Cypriot pottery.

Professor David Frankel, a specialist in Cypriot archaeology from La Trobe University, who assisted with the Potter exhibition, says there is a long and proud history of Australian involvement in Cypriot archaeology.

“It began in 1937, when a 24 year old Australian, James Stewart, excavated an Early Bronze Age cemetery at Vounous on the north coast. With the outbreak of war Stewart joined the Cyprus Regiment and served in the Suez Canal before being captured in 1941. He spent the rest of the war in prisoner-of-war camps, where, with the help of books sent by the Red Cross, he worked on the publication of Vounous.

“After the war Stewart accepted a position at Sydney University where he became Professor of Middle Eastern Archaeology. In 1955 he returned to Cyprus to excavate at Vasilia, on the north coast, and Ayia Paraskevi on the outskirts of Nicosia and, in 1960, at Karmi on the north coast,” Dr Frankel said.

BACKGROUND:
Cyprus, the modern capital of Cyprus, is built on top of the remains of several ancient settlements. A Chalcolithic village, founded around 3000 B.C., developed into an important town during the Bronze Age.

As the remains of this Bronze Age settlement are buried deep under Medieval Nicosia, the most prolific source of information has proven to be its cemeteries. The Cyprus Department of Antiquities vies with modern building development to rescue as much information as it can for the capital's history.

In this lecture Dr Georgiou presents an overview of the results of excavations he has conducted in the Bronze Age necropolis of Nicosia during the last decade.

BIOGRAPHY:
Dr Giorgos Georgiou is Senior Archaeological Officer in the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. He received his PhD in 2007 from the University of Cyprus, with a thesis on The Topography of Human Settlement in Cyprus during the Early and Middle Bronze Age.

He has directed excavations at sites of all periods in Cyprus but his research interests are focused on the Cypriot Bronze Age and the Cypriot city-kingdoms. His duties in the Department of Antiquities include conservation of monuments, site interpretation and archaeological survey as well as the management of exhibitions of Cypriot antiquities both in Cypriot museums and abroad.

He recently published a book on an Early Bronze Age cemetery at Psematismenos and has written numerous papers on his excavations at Nicosia, Kition and elsewhere.

Red Polished ware jug
Lapatsa, Karmi cemetery, Cyprus, Tomb 4, No. 14, Early Bronze Age, c. 2400–1950 BCE
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, Melbourne Cyprus Expedition Collection

ENDS
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