

Edgar J. Peltenburg - In Memoriam

DESPINA PILIDES and CHARALAMBOS PARASKEVA

The Association of Cypriot Archaeologists and the entire archaeological community of Cyprus deeply mourn the loss of one of the most gifted, distinguished and beloved personalities in the archaeology of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, Professor Edgar (Eddie) Peltenburg, who passed away on August 14th, 2016 after a short, but difficult battle with bone marrow cancer.

“There are no problems, only solutions”

The Life and Work of Edgar Peltenburg

Eddie was born on May 28th, 1942 in Montreal, the son of Edward and Mary Peltenburg, Dutch refugees who had immigrated amidst World War II from the Netherlands. The intrepid youth soon rose to prominence as an ice-hockey star during his high-school years, and continued to follow his passion for sports, when he arrived at the University of Birmingham to study. He graduated from Birmingham with a Bachelor (BA Honours) in Ancient History and Archaeology in 1963, and subsequently a PhD in Archaeology in 1968. The doctoral thesis dealt with faience, glass and glazes of the prehistoric Middle East and is entitled “Western Asiatic Glazed Vessels of the Second Millennium B.C.”. This interest in early vitreous materials remained an enduring pursuit of Eddie throughout his life and resulted in many publications on these topics. Furthermore, during his studies, he was fortunate to receive field training by such distinguished archaeologists as Kathleen Kenyon in Jerusalem and Charles Burney in north-western Iran.

Having just completed his Bachelor’s degree, Eddie was appointed assistant lecturer at McGill University in Montreal (1963-64), but a year later he moved back to the

University of Birmingham as a Research Fellow to undertake and complete his doctoral studies. Upon receipt of his doctorate in 1969, he moved with his first wife Marie and their newly born children to the West Highland harbour town of Oban and started teaching at the University of Glasgow as a Lecturer in Archaeology and Resident Staff Tutor for Argyll and Bute. He remained Glasgow's outreach resident tutor from 1969 to 1978, and continued to live in Oban, where he became deeply involved with the local archaeological societies and began excavations at a series of Iron Age sites in Argyll, and more specifically at Culcharron Cairn (1971-1972), Kintyre Nurseries (1972), Balloch Hillfort (1972), and Kildonan Galleried Dun (1978, 1983).

The year 1978 proved to be pivotal for Eddie's academic life, as in this year he was appointed a Lecturer in Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, where he found fertile ground to pursue his interests in early societies of the Eastern Mediterranean and develop his career as a teacher, whilst forming around him a circle of students and like-minded colleagues sharing the same passion for archaeology and fieldwork. During his time in Edinburgh, he separated from his first wife and married Dr. Diane Bolger, his long-term companion in research and fieldwork. The couple launched and brought to fruition some of the largest excavation projects in Cyprus and Syria, and produced high impact publications that have nurtured the theoretical thinking and practical methods employed by entire generations of younger scholars. In recognition of his numerous high quality research contributions to the prehistoric archaeology of Cyprus and the Near East, as well as the potential that his peers saw in the now experienced scholar, he was awarded a professorship (personal chair) in 1994, a position that he held until his retirement in 2007. After he left academia, Eddie remained very active in his research and continued to teach at the University of Edinburgh as an Emeritus Professor and Honorary Fellow until his death.

Parallel to his role as a teacher and researcher at the University of Edinburgh, Eddie was also a frequent reviewer for many prominent journals like *American Anthropologist*, *Antiquaries Journal*, *Anatolian Studies*, *British Archaeological Reports*, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, *Antiquity*, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, *Levant*, *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, *Paléorient*, while he sat on numerous university and conference committees, including, most importantly, the Council of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, and the Council of the British Institute for Archaeology and History at Amman. In addition, he served as a Trustee of the



*Figure 1: Eddie Peltenburg at the Sanctuary of Aphrodite at Kouklia-Palaepaphos.
(Photograph used with the permission of Dr. Diane Bolger).*

Council for British Research in the Levant, as a fieldwork reviewer for the British School at Athens and further maintained collaboration with numerous institutions like the American Schools of Oriental Research, Near Eastern Archaeological Society, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Australian Research Council, National Geographic Society, and the National Science Foundation. His multidimensional work and contributions to archaeology were universally recognized, as indicated by his election to Corresponding Member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (1991), Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1984), Member of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (2014), Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (FSA, 1984), Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (FSAScot, 1984), and Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (FRSE, 2010), while the American Schools of Oriental Research honoured him with the P.E. MacAllister Field Archaeology Award in 2010.

Turning to fieldwork in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, Eddie's first involvement with the archaeology of this part of the world was in 1964, when he arrived in Cyprus as a volunteer graduate student at the Neolithic site of *Philia-Drakos Site A*, a site that was being excavated by Trevor Watkins and the University of Edinburgh at the time. Part of his training included supervision of trenches and the study of pottery from the site. While examining the collection, his acute and observant eye started to discern chronological and classificatory issues, as the ceramic assemblage did not seem to fit the earlier typology established by Porphyrios Dikaïos for the southern part of Cyprus, even though the site dated to the exact same cultural period. This significant discrepancy sparked the young scholar's interest in transitions between cultural eras and would soon lead him to conduct some of the most extensive and lasting excavation projects on the island, that span a little over four decades.

After the completion of his doctoral studies and during his time in Oban, Eddie felt the calling of the East and started exploring the possibility of an excavation project in Cyprus. Opportunity arose in 1969, when the then Director of the Department of Antiquities Vassos Karageorghis invited Peltenburg as an expert prehistorian to excavate the Neolithic site of *Ayios Epiktitos-Vrysi* in the north coast of the island. Excavations lasted from 1969 to 1974, and in 1973 he carried out a surface survey of the wider region between *Ayios Epiktitos* and *Vasilia* in the district of Kyrenia. Unfortunately, both the excavation and survey project prior to their completion were violently interrupted in July 1974 by the Turkish invasion and occupation

of the northern half of Cyprus. Despite the interruption of field research, and the inaccessibility to material, which was stored in the Kyrenia Castle storerooms, Eddie proceeded to publish the site, as he considered that even an incomplete publication will go a long way in its preservation. He maintained his interest in the fate of the site and its status throughout and furnished the Department of Antiquities with valuable information that could be utilised in the efforts made to prevent the destruction of the cultural heritage of the island. At a later stage, he handed in all his original excavation records consisting of detailed plans, photographs, slides and diaries from the excavations at Ayios Epiktitos, thus fully conforming to the Antiquities Law and Regulations. A small ceremony was organised at the time of delivery as well as a press conference, to highlight the exemplary fashion in which this excavation was conducted and managed, despite accessibility problems. He was particularly pleased that digitisation of the records was initiated by the Department with a view of making the records available digitally to students and the public in general. Thus, his personal motto “there are no problems, only solutions” was fully adhered to in his actions.

The excavations at Ayios Epiktitos-*Vrysi* uncovered a well-preserved settlement dated via radiocarbon assays to the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic, while the pottery study demonstrated, for the first time, the co-existence of contemporary regional cultures operating across the island in the Neolithic. This led him to adopt a less rigid stance towards the chronology and evolution of prehistoric cultures, as it was realised that different social groups could co-habit the island and express themselves via the production of divergent forms of material culture. Thus, he decided to focus his research efforts on the operation and complex processes of transformation of small scale societies from the Neolithic revolution to the Late Bronze Age emergence of urbanization and social complexity.

This research agenda reorientation led him after the abrupt termination of operations at Ayios Epiktitos-*Vrysi* to the southwest of Cyprus, a virtual *terra incognita* at the time. Eddie started a preliminary reconnaissance in 1975 (as per oral communication with ex-Director of the Department of Antiquities Sophocles Hadjisavvas) to identify possible sites for further exploration. With the support of the Department of Antiquities and local institutions he established the Lemba Archaeological Research Centre in 1987 - he remained its director up to his death - and further conducted a detailed transect survey and trial excavation of the site Lemba-*Lakkous*. After the identification of the site as a Middle-Late Chalcolithic settlement of importance and interest, the initial research was followed by seven years of intensive survey and

excavations between 1976 and 1983. A deep appreciation for Cypriot archaeology, the recognition that small scale societies needed to be examined at a regional level and not solely as individual sites, coupled with a sense of urgency to beat advancing urbanization and the Land Consolidation Project of the 70s-80s in the Ktima Lowlands, expanded the initial objectives of the Lemba Archaeological Project to include the large-scale research excavations at the Neolithic to Early Chalcolithic settlement of Kissonerga-*Mylouthkia* between 1976 and 1981 (further intermittent or rescue excavations in 1989, 1994-1996, 2000), and the Neolithic to Late Chalcolithic settlement of Kissonerga-*Mosphilia* between 1982 and 1992 (initial sounding in 1979, and 1980), while the project also included a surface survey branch informally labelled the Western Cyprus Survey that conducted intermittent extensive surveys between 1976 and 1985 in the Paphos district, a more systematic survey of select areas at Peyia, Stavros tis Psokas, and Dhrousha in 1979, 1982, and 1983, recurrent visits to sites between 1985 and 1998, and more intensive re-surveys of recognized archaeological sites in 1999 and 2000.

The 1990s and 2000s were busy decades for Peltenburg, as the volumes for the excavations of the Kissonerga sites were being prepared for publication (*Kissonerga-Mosphilia* was published in 1998, *Kissonerga-Mylouthkia* came out in 2003), while at the same time he redirected his interests to another region of the Paphos district, namely the cluster of looted and disturbed Chalcolithic sites around the village of Souskiou, an area already informally surveyed by the Western Cyprus Survey. He began investigations of the vast cemeteries of Souskiou-*Vathyrkakas* in 1991, when he and Demos Christou, ex- Director of the Department of Antiquities co-directed the excavation of 8 tombs in Cemetery 1. This was followed by a second season between 1994 and 1997, when a further 39 tombs in the same cemetery were fully excavated. In 2002, a final visit to the site mapped all known archaeological evidence with a total station and located the heavily looted Cemetery 4. Parallel to Souskiou-*Vathyrkakas*, small task force groups of the Lemba Archaeological Project also conducted trial excavations of tombs from Cemetery 3 in 1991, 1999, and 2000, which correspond to the now fully excavated cemetery complex of Souskiou-*Laona*. These small-scale operations laid the groundwork for the first round of major excavations conducted in the Souskiou-*Laona* cemetery area between 2001-2004, while excavation of the adjacent settlement was undertaken between 2005 and 2011. Finally, while directing the Souskiou-*Laona* excavations, Eddie was also appointed Supervisor for the Working Group on Cyprus in the ARCANE Project (Associated Regional Chronologies for the

Ancient Near East, 2005-2011) of the European Science Foundation, which led to the first major re-evaluation of Cypriot prehistory in the 3rd millennium BC.

Parallel to Cyprus, in 1992 Eddie's interest in the transformation of small scale societies to early states took him to Syria and the tell site of Jerablus-*Tahtani* that lies south of the ancient biblical town of Carchemish, on the Turkish-Syrian border. He worked there in the framework of the Tishrin Dam International Salvage Programme following an invitation from Dr. Adnan Bounni (late Director of Excavations of Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria) for 11 long years - often holding seasons lasting five or six months - until 2004. The excavations uncovered a settlement established during the Uruk expansion from southern Mesopotamia and dating to the late 4th millennium BC, which gradually became a fortified seat of an early state in the late 3rd millennium BC. The first volume on the site was published in 2015, and it is hoped that a second volume will be published by team members in the future. In 2006, under the auspices of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Eddie returned to Syria to co-direct with the late professor Tony Wilkinson from the University of Durham, the Land of Carchemish project, a large systematic archaeological surface survey aiming to advance our understanding of the settlement patterns of the Fertile Crescent in the Holocene with a particular focus on the Euphrates uplands, and to provide a broader landscape context to the ancient city of Carchemish. The project built on previous experiences of its directors and lasted until 2010. The result was the publication of a significant volume in 2015 that redresses the imbalance between archaeological survey and rescue excavation in this region, the latter prompted and significantly augmented by the construction of several dams on the Euphrates river. Regrettably, after 2011 and the break out of the violent civil war, the border town of Jerablus became a theatre of war between opposing forces, and Eddie was unable to return to the sites he so much loved for further planned investigations, while, to his dismay, ties to friends, workers and colleagues in Syria were severed.

In sum, Eddie Peltenburg was one of the most diligent, prolific and industrious students of archaeology, and he managed, through careful planning and hard work, to remain at the forefront of archaeological discoveries from the 1960s to his untimely demise, patiently gathering evidence that allowed him to construct solid archaeological arguments regarding the prehistory of Scotland, Cyprus and Syria.



Figure 2: Eddie Peltenburg examining material from Souskiou-Laona at the Lusignan Royal Manor House, Kouklia-Palaepaphos. (Photograph used with the permission of Dr. Diane Bolger).

“When I look at the students and young researchers I am hopeful”

An Everlasting Legacy

George Orwell once wrote that “the planting of a tree, especially one of the long-living hardwood trees, is a gift which you can make to posterity at almost no cost and with almost no trouble, and if the tree takes root it will far outlive the visible effect of any of your other actions.” Eddie, being an eternal optimist and a far-seeing visionary, sought throughout his career to plant seeds that will far outlast his time with us. The legacy bequeathed by him to the scientific world is both extensive and to a certain degree elusive, as it contains elements that often remain hidden or are not easily perceived.

Primarily his most obvious contribution to the science of archaeology include ten voluminous excavation reports, two museum catalogues, seven edited or co-edited volumes on specialised subjects, close to 200 articles, reviews, chapters and reports in academic peer-reviewed journals, conference volumes and in other mediums; as well as the full archive of his excavations at *Ayios Epiktitos-Vrysi*, which he donated to the Department of Antiquities in 2011 as mentioned above, and the partial archives of his excavations at *Kissonerga-Mylothkia*, *Kissonerga-Mosphilia*, and *Jerablus-Tahtani* that have been openly released via various depositories and websites online. Finally, his perseverance, dedication and love for archaeology allowed him to complete, under extremely difficult conditions prior to his death, all necessary preparations for the last major project he had undertaken in Cyprus, namely the publication of the multiannual excavation at the *Souskiou-Laona* cemetery and settlement complex, which is due to be published soon with the efforts of his widow, Dr. Diane Bolger, and his student Dr. Lindy Crewe, who are currently editing the volume. The prehistoric world of small scale societies, which he struggled to bring to light with so much devotion and labour, is vividly brought to life, simultaneously with scientific precision and noematic clarity. The themes treated in Eddie’s lifework include all aspects of the daily life and material culture expressions of prehistoric societies, the dynamic socio-political relationships and complex interactions between small scale societies, the social and technological transitions between eras, the emergence of urbanism, the political, diplomatic, social and economic changes in the Eastern Mediterranean during the late prehistoric and protohistoric periods, the incipience of metallurgy and development of early vitreous materials, the transfer modes of technological know-how, social ideas and aesthetic preferences between geographically distant human groups, the migration of populations and movement of artefacts in prehistory, and the religious beliefs, etiquette and ritual practices of people in prehistory. The novel ideas and ground-breaking arguments

in his work will remain a source of inspiration for generations of archaeologists to come, while the trove of data brought forth shall remain an indelible resource for the archaeology of the regions he touched upon.

Another aspect of Eddie's legacy concerns the multitude of students who directly or indirectly benefited from his ideas, teaching, supervising, field training and tutoring. Whether in the classrooms at Glasgow and Edinburgh, or in the field at Lemba, Kouklia and Jerablus, several generations of undergraduates, graduates, and early stage researchers have come to know and respect the Peltenburg approach to archaeological thinking. At the centre of the latter are, on the one hand, the raw data on the theme under investigation that he often generously provided or allowed access to, and, on the other hand, the pervasive and constant questioning of one's self regarding the premises of inquiry and field of vision. This data-centric philosophical approach to archaeology aimed at encouraging a widening of the researchers' horizons of perception on the topic investigated and the acquisition of a thorough command of the underlying data and literature; and at the same time to infuse them with the positive anxiety of self-reflection that reduces biases and leads to an acceptance of one's ignorance, as a medium to overcome it. Although disconcerting at the outset, Eddie counter-balanced the negative weight of this type of critical thinking with his unwavering support, as well as an in-depth knowledge, helpful advice, contagious enthusiasm, and a 'go get 'em' personality that inspired students to work hard and overcome obstacles. Additionally, he had the unique ability to direct students' efforts and labour to appropriate channels in accordance with their abilities and competences, while at the same time integrating everyone's efforts into a collaborative research process that engendered a sense of belonging and personal responsibility for the outcome. This, in turn, generated a familial atmosphere for students, researchers and managers alike that led to deeper collaborations and more fruitful and innovative research, as no idea was rejected *a priori*. Moreover, it promoted trust, respect and amity between team members, which found its most salient expressions after work in the field was done for the day and team members would gather on the rooftop of their temporary home for a beer and endless chatting under the watchful, inquisitive gaze of Eddie. Finally, it is through his tireless efforts and supervision that numerous doctoral theses came to fruition, and countless careers in archaeology were launched leaving behind a long trail of second- and third-generation publications.

Turning to less tangible elements of Eddie's legacy to the archaeology of Cyprus and the Near East, it is necessary to adopt a 'longue durée' perspective of the discipline's history

in these regions. If Myres, Gjerstad, Dikaios and Stewart and Layard, von Oppenheim, Hogarth, Mallowan and Wooley may be considered the founding fathers of Cypriot and Near Eastern prehistoric archaeology respectively, it is the research excavations and surveys of the 1960s-2000s that provided their initial corpus with sufficient data to acquire a solid structure and essence, while at the same time the oncoming of theoretically oriented archaeologists stimulated the debates and broadened the topics explored by archaeology in these regions. As a master fieldworker, Eddie amassed data that significantly enriched the information pool of these areas, and in parallel he questioned the inferences of previous researchers, forging and filtering his own theories through both the new data and the novel theories of social and cultural evolution that critical Processualism and Post-Processualism actively promoted. A careful reading of his work reveals a gradual transition from late Processual thinking that includes structural Marxism and Cognitive Processualism to a nuanced and informed utilization of ideas from Hodder's Contextual Archaeology, which are realistically grounded in the archaeological material culture of Cyprus and Syria alike. In accord with the Hodderian mandate for holistic examination of all possible facets of datasets, he structured his arguments based on the investigation of ecology, economy, society, politics, ideology, behaviour and ritual. These manifested themselves in chronological presentations of individual themes in his excavation reports prior to the synthesis of data in the conclusory chapter of each volume, and in the espousal of scientific archaeology and archaeometry, which included the adoption of radiocarbon dating, archaeozoological and paleobotanical studies and metals and ceramics provenance and characterization analyses that often led to a deep renegotiation of the theories advanced. These contributions justifiably afford Eddie a prominent position among those revolutionary thinkers of the 1960s-2000s whose efforts brought about advancements in all facets of the archaeological discipline in Cyprus and the Near East, but most importantly have prepared the stage for the advent of a more science-based and theoretically elaborate archaeology.

Through Eddie's life's work, both tangible and intangible, one may perceive the genius, open-mindedness and mental acuteness that characterized him, while his deep knowledge, rational criticism, and inclination for rupture with past arguments have led to his recognition as one of the leading archaeologists in the Eastern Mediterranean. The written legacy bequeathed to us by Professor Edgar Peltenburg will continue to be valued for generations to come, while the memories of those who had the privilege and good fortune to know him shall forever remain a personal treasure.