**An interdisciplinary study of Apliki*, the most important copper mine of Late Bronze Age Cyprus and beyond* (APLIKI)**

Within the Troodos foothills, in the geological formation known as the Pillow Lavas, there are rich copper ore deposits, thanks to which Cyprus is considered to be one of the richest countries in copper per surface area in the world. Because of this mineral wealth, the island played a leading role in the metals’ trade throughout Antiquity. Although the earliest phase of copper extraction is chronologically placed in the second half of the third millennium, the production and the export of copper developed significantly in the Late Bronze Age (LBA) period (1600-1050 BC), reaching a peak in the thirteenth century BC. From 1450 BC onwards Cypriot copper, in the shape of oxhide ingots, was exported far and wide around the east and central Mediterranean. According to Lead Isotope Analysis, the copper used to produce the most of these ingots was extracted from the ore deposit of Apliki, making it one of the most important loci for the LBA Mediterranean.

The mine of Apliki lies within Cyprus’ richest mining district, that of Solea, which in modern times produced more than 80% of the total copper ore concentrate exported from the island. In 1938, the Cyprus Mining Corporation began to exploit the Apliki deposit and the remains of a Late Bronze Age miners’ settlement came to light. Joan Du Plat Taylor, a young woman working for the Department of Antiquities, was asked to carry out the rescue excavations. She did a remarkably good job but she only published some preliminary reports (Du Plat Taylor 1940; 1952). Then in the 1960s, unfortunately, the site was destroyed by the open cast mine.

The finds and the excavation diaries, however, are stored in the Cyprus Museum and they were used by Kling and Muhly to produce a monograph on the excavation, which includes several specialist studies (Kling and Muhly 2007). The most important part of the archaeological assemblage, however, namely that which is related to the production of copper, has not been fully studied and published. Muhly presented some preliminary results concerning the archaeometallurgical material from the site in a paper published in 1989 (Muhly 1989), but did not pursue this, and Kassianidou was asked to take over the task of completing this key study (Kassianidou 2018).

The aim of the current project is to apply an interdisciplinary approach and use a variety of scientific techniques to complete the study of the archaeological and archaeometallurgical assemblage from this extraordinary site. Apliki-Karamallos remains to this date, more than eighty years since its discovery, the only Late Bronze Age mining settlement to be discovered and excavated in Cyprus. Scholarship has failed so far to extract much key evidence from the available material. Preserved letters from Amarna to the Egyptian pharaoh in the 14th century BC highlight that the king of ancient Alashiya (Cyprus) was closely engaged in trade in large shipments of copper: copper production and trade was central to LBA Cyprus (Knapp 2008). The lack of complete investigation of the Apliki material thus greatly restricts a full knowledge of LBA Cyprus. This project assembles an international team consisting of both senior and junior scientists to study the material fully, advance the study of ancient metallurgy, and finally give the Apliki the consideration it deserves.