Boom and bust in the Bronze Age: Mining, metallurgy and society in ancient Cyprus

Emeritus Professor David Frankel

When: Thursday 30th July 2015
Where: Bldg 41, Room 153
Time: 1:30 – 2:30pm
Light refreshments provided

Presenter: Emeritus Professor David Frankel, La Trobe University

Biography: Professor David Frankel studied archaeology at the University of Sydney and Gothenburg University, where he specialised on Cypriot prehistory. After some years in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, The British Museum, he returned to Australia in 1978 to take up a lectureship at La Trobe University, where he is now Professor in Archaeology. In 1993 he was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and from 1996 to 1998 served on the Humanities Panel of the Australian Research Council. He is a member of the Permanent Council of the International Union of Pre- and Proto-Historic Sciences and joint Editor-in-Chief of the monograph series Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology. His research interests include Australian Aboriginal archaeology with particular reference to south-eastern Australia and the archaeology of the Bronze Age in Cyprus where he has carried out excavations at Marki Alonia, Deneia and Politiko Kokkinorotsos.

Image: A Late Bronze Age Cypriot carrying a large copper ingot

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In the ancient world Cyprus was synonymous with copper for the island was a major source of the metal. But, as with all mining, economic, technological and social factors encouraged or inhibited production at different times. In this lecture recent archaeological research will be used to trace the fluctuating fortunes of miners and society over more than 1,000 years. Copper production was introduced to Cyprus at the start of the Bronze Age (2,400 BCE). Understanding the causes and implications of this innovation presents a major challenge to archaeologists. Two centuries later the effects of a downturn in external demand can be identified. However there was a renewed increase in the intensity of production during the Middle Bronze Age, after 2000 BCE. Later, as Cyprus became integrated into the complex economic and political systems of the eastern Mediterranean Late Bronze Age empires, the scale of production reached unprecedented heights, once again linked to major transformations of society within the island.