In the frame of the
TEXNH: Making, creating, and agency networks in the Ancient Mediterranean world
lecture series and discussion forum, we kindly invite you to the lecture

"Prices, values, and equivalences of metals in the Eastern Mediterranean markets of the Late Bronze Age: Copper, silver and gold"

by

Prof. Dr. George Papasavvas
University of Cyprus, Nicosia

Discussant: **Dr. Stephanie Aulsebrook**, Assistant Professor, Warsaw University

26 November 2025, 18.00

at the Netherlands Institute at Athens

11, Makri str., 117 42 Athens

The event will also be streamed live. For registration please visit:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/wiovj2XyScK6eBMMCy6e4Q

Abstract

In the Late Bronze Age Cyprus established close diplomatic and commercial ties with the empires and kingdoms of the Eastern Mediterranean, from the Aegean to Egypt and from Sardinia to Mesopotamia. As part of these international economic networks, Cypriots produced and circulated immense quantities of copper, as the wide distribution of oxhide copper ingots in the Mediterranean and beyond testifies. Egyptian, Hittite, and Near Eastern texts also document the large scale of the Cypriot copper trade. The same sources inform us of the establishment of exchange rates of copper when it was traded with other metals, mainly gold and silver. In other words, they provide important information on the prices and equivalences of precious and base metals in international markets. This evidence also demonstrates that in the Late Bronze Age barter economy, copper and other metals were not merely raw materials, utilized for the construction of all sorts of objects: They were also used as fixed reference points for determining the value of everything, from the purchase of goods and services to the payment of wages, both at a state and at a private level. This information raises several questions, firstly, around the commercial, market value of Cypriot copper in the international markets of the time, and secondly, about the numbers of copper objects that could be manufactured if one had unlimited access to such large quantities of this metal.