

# GUIDE TO PHLAMOUDHI



MIRIAM AND IRA D. WALLACH ART GALLERY

# GUIDE TO PHLAMOUDI

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MIRIAM AND IRA D. WALLACH ART GALLERY

Columbia University in the City of New York

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This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition  
*Settlement and Sanctuary on Cyprus from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages:*  
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FRONT COVER:

View of Phlamoudhi-*Melissa*, looking south, with Trench 2 in the foreground and Trench 1 at the right

BACK COVER:

View of Phlamoudhi-*Vounari*, looking north

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*This guide is dedicated to all  
who have contributed  
to the archaeology of  
the village of Phlamoudhi  
and its environs.*



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## PREFACE

Phlamoudhi is a small village located on the north coast of Cyprus. Most remarkable among the archaeological discoveries there are the sites of *Melissa* and *Vounari*. They preserve unique views into the expanding world of international sea trade in the Mediterranean Late Bronze Age. When I first read about the excavations in the village of Phlamoudhi, while researching my dissertation in 1992 at the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute in Nicosia, little did I expect to contribute to their publication or public display. At that time, I wrote to the director of the Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi, Professor Edith Porada, to inquire about some worked bone objects from the excavations. In reply, she kindly referred me to her student Daphne Achilles, who was working on discoveries from *Melissa*.

In 2000, when I came to Columbia to interview for a position in the Department of Art History and Archaeology, Professor Stephen Murray, then the chair, asked me if I knew that the department housed most of the objects found in the Phlamoudhi excavations. He also wondered whether I knew how their publication might be completed and the objects subsequently returned to the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. When I arrived at Columbia University to teach in the fall of 2000, not only did I encounter the Phlamoudhi material, but also I then met and began to work with Daphne Achilles. She was a considerable help as I began to plan for the publication and exhibition of the discoveries made by the original team in the early 1970s. The exhibition idea came about during an open house for the Phlamoudhi archaeological lab in February 2001. Professor David Rosand inquired whether the discoveries might form the basis for a show in the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery. With the support of Sarah Elliston Weiner and Jeanette Silverthorne of the gallery, that proposed show became a reality.

This *Guide to Phlamoudhi* is modeled on the standard series of Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation guidebooks to archaeological sites on Cyprus. It represents the work of countless individuals who have contributed to the original discovery, the study and analysis, and, ultimately, the publication of sites found by the Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi. The guidebook accompa-



nies the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery exhibition *Settlement and Sanctuary on Cyprus from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages: Views from the Columbia University Excavations at Phlamoudhi* (20 January through 19 March 2005).

Visitors to the exhibition experience simulated visits to the two main sites of *Melissa* and *Vounari*. Photographs, floor plans, maps, and original objects from the excavations highlight the settlements and sanctuaries found there. There are also comparative pieces from the Cesnola Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Myres 1914: nos. 98, 213, 738, 818, 1046b; Karageorghis et al. 2004: nos. 11, 131, 158, 323), the Pierpont Morgan Library (Porada 1948a: nos. 1049, 1063, 1069), and Columbia University's own collection. In addition, the visitor learns about the history of archaeological work in the village, including tombs excavated and surveys conducted in the region, and the significance of that work for what is known about Cyprus and its role in the eastern Mediterranean over the last four thousand years of human history.

With the guidebook and exhibition, the visitor comes as close to a full visit to the sites as is possible at the present time. Since 1974, the village of Phlamoudhi has not been accessible for systematic archaeological investigation. Should that situation change, the sites could be cleaned, conserved, and opened to the public. Only then could this guide inform a visitor at the actual places described in the following pages.

What we know about ancient Phlamoudhi survives mainly in the written records of the original Columbia expedition, in copious photographs and drawings by the original team and ours, and the thousands of ceramic, terracotta, metal, and stone artifacts uncovered in the excavations. Most of this material is housed at Columbia University in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the time that I write this book. The objects, brought to Columbia for study in 1973 with a permit from the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, will be returned to Cyprus after the exhibition closes. The Cyprus Museum, in Nicosia, is currently home to some of the more unusual artifacts. Still more objects from the excavations were originally stored in the schoolhouse in the village of Phlamoudhi and in the museum in Famagusta, Cyprus. Those pieces are assumed now to be lost, although we are fortunate to have photographs and drawings of most of them.



This volume is intended as a general guide to the discoveries made by the original Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi and to the approaches and interpretations of the current Phlamoudhi Archaeological Project. It focuses on the second-millennium-BC settlements of *Melissa* and *Vounari*, their cultural outlook from the north coast of Cyprus, and their roles in artistic, economic, and strategic interconnections in the Mediterranean world. Both places were reoccupied from the Archaic through the Hellenistic period when they served as sanctuaries, possibly indicating parts of the boundaries of contemporary settlements. Surface finds from the Roman, Byzantine, Medieval, and Modern periods attest to occupation of the area right up to the present village of Phlamoudhi. The full results of the archaeological work in the area will appear in volumes to be published by the American Schools of Oriental Research in their Archaeological Reports Series. At the present time, further information about our work may be found on our Web site: [www.learn.columbia.edu/phlamoudhi/](http://www.learn.columbia.edu/phlamoudhi/).

*Joanna S. Smith*

*Director, Phlamoudhi Archaeological Project*

*November 2004*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cyprus has been part of the international fabric of the Mediterranean world throughout its history. Its wealth of resources and strategic location in the eastern Mediterranean have made it a desirable acquisition by rulers. It has been claimed by or fully integrated into many empires, including the Assyrian, Persian, Ptolemaic, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and British. Part of the island's importance derives from the Troodos Mountains, rich in copper, from which Cyprus takes its name. Artisans created weapons, tools, vessels, and ships out of the metals, stones, clays, and wood of the island. The cultivation of grains, including flax, and the herding of animals, including sheep, provided fibers for linen and woolen textiles. These fabrics were dyed many colors, including royal purple extracted from the murex. Over the long history of Cyprus, grains, olives and olive oil, salt, and sugar cane were among the wealth of products that reached its Mediterranean neighbors and beyond.

Archaeological investigations in the village of Phlamoudhi offer new perspectives on the island and its international connections during the last four thousand years. Located north of the Kyrenia Mountain range, Phlamoudhi is separated from the rich copper resources of the island by this formidable geographic barrier. The occupants of the Phlamoudhi area created unique artistic forms and developed a distinct regional identity. Accounting systems and locally made ceramics attest to close relations with Cilicia to the north, places on and near the Orontes River to the east, and in the Levant. Inhabitants also had access to oils, tablewares, stones, and metals from throughout the Mediterranean, from the Levant to the Aegean and points farther west.

Evidence, albeit scant, shows that life in the Phlamoudhi area extends back into the Neolithic period. The best-preserved of the prehistoric settlements, however, date to the second millennium BC, particularly the Late Bronze Age. This period witnessed improvements in seafaring technology and led to the regular involvement of Cyprus in the exchange of artistic ideas and commodities with the Near East, the Aegean, the Levant, and Egypt. The area was reoccupied in the first millennium BC, when settlements of the Bronze Age were rediscovered and



marked as if they were part of a legendary past. As in other parts of the Mediterranean, these Bronze Age places were used as sanctuaries, where worshippers left votives for their gods. Tombs, buildings, and scatters of pottery sherds attest to the lives of people in the area of Phlamoudhi village right up to the present day.

*The Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi*

On 9 March 1970, Dr. Vassos Karageorghis, then Director of Antiquities of Cyprus, signed a license for excavation at Phlamoudhi-*Vounari*. With this permit, the Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi began its archaeological excavations and survey in and around the village of Phlamoudhi. The project was generously supported by the Harold H. Weekes Fund, which was set up by Mrs. C. B. (Happy) Scully, the daughter of Harold Weekes and a close friend of Profes-



*Fig. 3* Participants in the Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi, with *Vounari* in the background, 1972



sor Edith Porada, the director of the expedition. Edith Porada appointed Dr. Sarantis Symeonoglou as the field director.

One of Edith Porada's aims was to provide excavation experience for her graduate students (fig. 3). Many of them, in addition to other students and specialists in photography, architecture, faunal analysis, and other fields, joined the project on Cyprus and worked on the discoveries after they were brought to New York: Daphne Achilles, Charles Adelman, James Allen, Selma Al-Radi, Dimitri Anson, Susan Bodenstein, Ian Cohn, Mr. and Mrs. Angel Coronado, Mary Dabney, Anne Donadeo, Sally Dunham, Allan Gilbert, Joseph Giuliano, Judson Harward, Teresa Hersch, Brian Hesse, Webb Keane, Helen Merrillees, Robert S. Merrillees, Richard Moore, Anne Ogilvy, Samuel Paley, Holly Pittman, Corethia Qualls, Donald Sanders, Jeffrey Schwartz, Happy Scully, Rheba Symeonoglou, Javier Teixidor, Paula Wapnish, and Lin Welden.

Fieldwork took place from 1970 to 1973, when excavations were halted and work on their publication began. The team expected to return to complete architectural plans and the study of objects stored in the village schoolhouse in 1974. Sadly, the invasion of that year and the occupation of the area by the Turkish military put an end to fieldwork in Phlamoudhi. The villagers, with whom the team worked closely during their field seasons, abandoned Phlamoudhi and moved to the southern part of the island or left Cyprus entirely. It is possible to study the results of their fieldwork today because the field notebooks, photographs, maps, find cards, and other records survive along with thousands of objects unearthed in the excavations. In 1973, the project was given the rare permission to export the majority of the finds to New York for study and illustration in preparation for their publication. Had it not been for this export, only a tiny portion of the work on the excavations since 1973 would have been possible.

Edith Porada was an eminent scholar of ancient Near Eastern art history and archaeology at Columbia University (Pittman 1995). She became interested in the art and archaeology of Cyprus through her study of cylinder seals. In two landmark publications in 1948, she published the collection of cylinder seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library (1948a) in New York and, in an article for the *American Journal of Archaeology* (1948b), laid the foundation for all future studies of

Cypriot cylinder seals. Seals, usually of stone, are only a few centimeters in size. They were worn as amulets and used as markers of one's authority or responsibility in economic, legal, and political matters. They come in many shapes, some with a flat carved surface and others, called cylinder seals, with a surface that provides for a continuous horizontal field of decoration. The finely carved intaglio design on cylinder seals was impressed, usually by rolling, onto a clay or other soft surface. In Cypriot seals, Edith Porada recognized antecedents in Syrian seals from the Middle Bronze Age combined with sensibilities derived from Minoan and Mycenaean figural art.

About the Phlamoudhi excavations, Porada wrote that "our aim was to excavate a settlement of the Middle Bronze Age in the hope of finding relations between Western Asiatic and Aegean sites, for which Cyprus might have been an intermediary" (Al-Radi 1983: unnumbered, preface). In 1973, Sally Dunham unearthed a single cylinder seal in a mixed deposit dating to the Late Cypriot II period (fig. 4). Its design is emblematic of Porada's ideas about interconnections in Cypriot art of the artistic styles of the Near East and the Aegean. Appropriately enough, the centerpiece of the design is a lion, the mascot of Columbia University.

In her preliminary publication of the seal, Porada pointed out that "the Near Eastern manner was meant to maintain a lasting stage; the Aegean, to show life in motion" (1986: 294). As the impression shows, a lion is firmly anchored in the design, with a winged sun disk at the top. None of the other creatures or symbols appears to be fixed within the scene. The lion reaches out to claw a bull; the bull, with its horns spearing the foreleg of the lion, strides beyond the groundline of the seal; the griffon rears up its head in response to the contest below; and the goat gallops away as fast as its legs will take it. All the activity is set within a celestially symbolic marine environment. Not only does the design embody Porada's identification of an international style in Cypriot seals, but it mirrors Phlamoudhi's position in the second millennium BC: Phlamoudhi was a constant as well as an active participant in the Mediterranean world at a time when celestial navigation in the open sea was becoming increasingly important.

The Columbia University Expedition achieved, even exceeded, Edith Porada's initial research and educational goals. What was discovered during four



Fig. 4

Hematite cylinder seal from *Melissa* and a modern impression



years of fieldwork included two major sites that were excavated, a large settlement at *Melissa* and a hilltop building at *Vounari*, as well as tombs and surface scatters of ceramic, terracotta, stone, and glass objects. To be sure, some of the remains in the vicinity of Phlamoudhi village had been known prior to the arrival of the Columbia team. For example, Hector Catling recorded and visited the *Vounari* hill and the *Sapilou* site in 1952, which together with a site called *Gouppes* appeared in his seminal article about Bronze Age Cypriot settlement patterns (1962: 168).

In 1970, the Columbia team investigated the *Vounari* hill, as stipulated in the original license to excavate. *Vounari*, meaning “conical hill,” is a prominent place visible to anyone walking, riding, or driving between the village of Phlamoudhi and the seacoast. As with other archaeological sites on Cyprus, Phlamoudhi-*Vounari* is named after the village and the locality or field in which the site is to be found.

Initially, the team thought that *Vounari* was a Middle Bronze Age fortification, as proposed by Catling and others. The Columbia excavations, however, showed that it also had a significant Late Bronze Age component as well as Archaic and Hellenistic remains. The team determined that they had found a sanctuary rather than a fortification. Therefore, in 1971, they set out to restudy the context of *Vounari* by conducting a survey of the Phlamoudhi region in order to “learn about the archaeological history of this isolated area” (Symeonoglou 1972: 187).

The survey, led by Sarantis Symeonoglou, recorded a total of thirty-six sites,



including the *Vounari* hill. Others were *Melissa*, the settlement site that the team began to excavate that same year, and *Sapilou*, which had previously been located by Catling. Only the most cursory of excavations at *Sapilou* took place before the larger-scale excavations at *Melissa* began. *Melissa*, a name that may refer to honey supplies and possibly beekeeping activity, turned out to be a place with two meters of occupational debris. Most of it comes from more than 550 years of activity in and around a large administrative building with associated ceramic, metal, and other workshops of the Bronze Age. Remains just under and on the surface come from the Archaic period and later.

The earliest of the places located in the survey was *Lakkos*, on the coast north of the *Melissa* settlement. Evidence for its use in the Neolithic period could not be substantiated by the team, although Porphyrios Dikaios had previously reported finding Neolithic stone tools (Ibid.: 190). Nicholas Stanley Price also identified *Lakkos* among other prehistoric sites in the region (1979: 119, F2). A tomb of the late Archaic and early Classical period was found at the site of *Pallouri* (Symeonoglou 1972: 195) and excavated by Edith Porada and Happy Scully (fig. 5). A rock-cut tomb of the Hellenistic period was located at *Spilios tou Tsali* (fig. 6) (Ibid.), which had previously been identified by D. G. Hogarth, who published it with a plan (1889: 99–101).

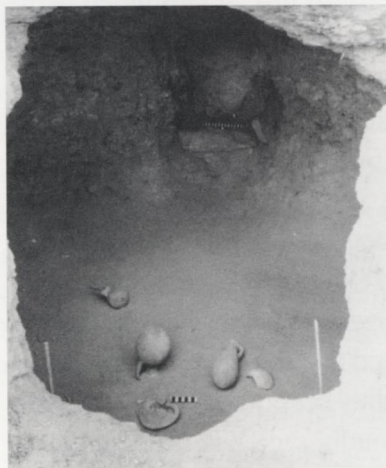


Fig. 5 Phlamoudhi-Pallouri, as viewed through a hole in the roof

Among the many other intriguing places found are *Angaremenos*, which may have had a pottery workshop in use as early as the Roman period (Symeonoglou 1972: 193), and natural salt pools at *Limnionoudhi*, which may have been exploited in the Byzantine period (Ibid.: 194). Standing remains of another Hellenistic tomb at *Tsonia* and a church near the Bronze Age *Melissa* site (Ibid.: 193–94) are also particularly noteworthy. Symeonoglou writes that “the present inhabitants of Phlamoudhi still remember that their ancestors moved . . . from *Melissa*. Like other villages in the area, Phlamoudhi was built behind

a large hill (called *Vigla*, which means lookout hill), to hide it from pirates. *Melissa* was probably abandoned after the island became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1571” (Ibid.: 193).

Excavations at *Vounari* and *Melissa* continued in 1972 and 1973. The work was conducted in a stratigraphic manner, with the sites divided into different trenches, or zones of excavation. For each trench, as horizontal layers of earth were removed, a section of the earth cut through was kept as a reference on all sides, forming dividers or baulks of earth between the trenches. Deposits or loci of earth, ash, stone, and other material were removed, with attention to the sequence of their deposition in the ground. Because careful records were kept and the pottery and other objects were labeled according to the loci in which they were found, it is possible to reconstruct the building phases, periods of destruction and abandonment, and the activities of the people who occupied ancient *Vounari* and *Melissa*.

The team recorded all the ceramic, stone, glass, and other man-made objects and kept samples or selections of the most identifiable or diagnostic pieces, such as painted sherds and the handles, rims, and bases of vessels. In addition, the Columbia project collected animal bones and ancient plant materials. Allan Gilbert, who worked at the *Melissa* site, introduced water sieving or flotation, which allowed for the retrieval of tiny remains of fish and even figs. After the excavations, he and others embarked on some preliminary scientific analyses, including neutron-activation analysis and thin-section studies of the ceramics, to determine their chemical and mineralogical composition, possible points of origin, and similarity to other contemporary ceramics. These studies are still under way.



Fig. 6 Hellenistic rock-cut tomb at Phlamoudhi-*Spilios tou Tsali*



Following each season of excavation, the more unusual objects, including the cylinder seal, some of the bronze finds, the limestone and terracotta figurines and statuettes, and a selection of large stone and terracotta tools and vessels were deposited in the Cyprus Museum. One large stone vessel found in 1971 went to the Famagusta Museum. All other finds were brought back to Columbia University with the exception of some ceramic vessels, many of the stone tools, most of the glass fragments, and a few fragments of ivory, metal, and terracotta that were stored in the schoolhouse in the village of Phlamoudhi. Once the finds and records were in New York, their study commenced in laboratory space at the university. The lab has moved several times between 1973 and 2004. Today, most of the items brought to Columbia are still together as a collection, with the exception of some of the animal bones that remain to be located.

Some of the excavation results were published by the original Columbia team. An article on the animal bone by Brian Hesse, Anne Ogilvy, and Paula Wapnish appeared in the *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus* (1975). Most notably, Selma Al-Radi published the essentials of the architecture and stratigraphy for the site of *Vounari* in 1983. That volume also contained a report on faunal remains (Hesse et al. 1983). Edith Porada published the cylinder seal in 1986. Some of the scientific studies based on the sherd material appeared in articles by Sarah Vaughan (1991a, b) and in a volume about the provenience of Bronze Age objects (Knapp and Cherry 1994).

In 1991, a separate project that also pertains to Phlamoudhi appeared. Sophocles Hadjisavvas published the results of surveys by the Bureau for the Establishment of the Inventory of the Cultural Property of Cyprus. Although this inventory, begun in 1973, had to be left incomplete because of the events of 1974, the volume nevertheless contains clear maps and important information for the area of Phlamoudhi (1991: 14–21) and surrounding villages, including Akanthou (Ibid.: 1–13), the village in which the *Melissa*, *Lakkos*, *Pallouri*, and *Angaremenos* sites technically are located.



### *The Phlamoudhi Archaeological Project*

In 2000, I worked with students at Columbia University to launch a new campaign to complete the publication of the Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi. To distinguish between the original project's contributions and our analyses and interpretations, this project was called the Phlamoudhi Archaeological Project. First, we set up a new lab space with the help of Daphne Achilles. She, Allan Gilbert, and Robert Merrillees proved to be invaluable sources of information about the original project. Sally Dunham, Samuel Paley, Holly Pittman, and other original team members have also contributed to our understanding.

Although I did not direct the original excavation of the archaeological sites, the current project has been, nonetheless, an excavation as well as a survey. Becoming familiar with the notes and discoveries made by other people necessitated rediscovering objects housed in different parts of the Columbia University campus and in the Cyprus Museum. By reading and analyzing the notes, I have tried to understand as much as possible of the thought process of the original Columbia University Expedition to Phlamoudhi. Using their detailed records, I have been able to formulate my own hypotheses about the artistic, economic, regional, and international significance of the findings. And, in the case of *Melissa*, I reconstructed more than ten periods of occupation rather than the two proposed by the original team.

Being prevented from returning to the sites to record or clean them has been both a blessing and curse. It would have been preferable, for example, to go to *Melissa* and complete the architectural plan of the excavations prior to publication. Had we had the opportunity to clean the sites, however, it would have been irresistible to apply for permits to test, through excavation, some of the more enigmatic parts of the excavated areas. By not having access, it has been easier to focus on completing the publication. We have thus been able to address a long-standing interest of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, as well as other professional organizations such as the Archaeological Institute of America and the American Schools of Oriental Research: completing the publication of an old excavation and making the results known to the public.

We were pleased to receive the permission and support of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. Just after the new project got under way, I received a letter dated 9 February 2001 from Dr. Despo Pilides, written on behalf of the director of the Department of Antiquities. She called the publication of the material at Columbia University from the excavations at Phlamoudhi-*Melissa* “excellent news.” “As you know we have been focusing our efforts for some time now on arousing interest amongst excavators/archaeologists to publish the material from old, unpublished excavations. Consequently, your proposal to publish the material from Phlamoudhi is particularly welcome.”

Several undergraduate and graduate students as well as nonstudent volunteers have contributed significantly to the Phlamoudhi Archaeological Project. Those who have served as long-term lab assistants and/or full summer season team members are Carolyn Bancroft, Ellen Blount, Anna Browne-Ribeiro, Roberta Casagrande-Kim, Nancy Dammann-Davis, Todd Davis, Mara Horowitz, Kyle Killian, Sandrine Larrivé-Bass, Martina Mims, Lauren Rogers, Elizabeth Sanseau, Polly Tessler, Amy Tjiong, Courtney Tomaselli, and Lee Ullmann. Dr. David Reese has conducted independent research on the bone and shell collections. Reconstructions of some of the most complete vessels that appear in the exhibition were done in part by Daphne Achilles prior to 2000, but more recent conservation efforts were contributed by Catherine Sease of the Peabody Museum at Yale University and Carola Garcia Manzano, an independent conservator.

Our first concern was to examine the tens of thousands of ceramic fragments from the *Melissa* excavations. Kyle Killian agreed to study and publish the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Medieval, and Modern ceramics, most of which came from surface deposits. For research on the Middle to Late Bronze Age and the Archaic to Classical ceramics, the lab was open one day a week during the semesters and for one entire month in the summer of 2002 (fig. 7). I used the collection as an on-campus archaeological experience for students to learn how to work with archaeological ceramics. It was during that period that I recognized evidence for Bronze Age ceramic manufacture at *Melissa*.

The work at Columbia continued through 2004 with ceramic and small find illustration, with original records to reconstruct the stratigraphy, and with the



preparation for this exhibition. In 2003, I took a small group to the Cyprus Museum to study stone and bronze tools, precious stone beads, limestone and terracotta sculptures, some ceramics, and ancient plant remains from the *Melissa*, *Vounari*, *Pallouri*, and *Marikou* sites. We also had our first opportunity to visit the village of Phlamoudhi. Dr. Robert Merrillees, who had been part of the original expedition, accompanied us to Phlamoudhi. We found the schoolhouse and the *Vounari* site. At the time of our visit, free travel across the United Nations green line was only just beginning. Official permission for our trip from the Department of Antiquities was not possible, but we were pleased to learn that any photographs that we took during our visit could be used to document the sites and could appear in our publications. It was not until 2004 that two members of my team, Lee Ullmann and Mara Horowitz, relocated *Melissa*. It was good to know that the sites are still there, should the opportunity appear to return to Phlamoudhi and complete the recording begun in the early 1970s.

Also in 2003, Mara Horowitz embarked on a study of the ceramics from *Vounari* and a restudy of that site's architecture and stratigraphy for her Ph.D. dissertation. In the course of her work, she has challenged the identification of *Vounari* solely as a cult place in the Bronze Age. We think now that its monumental building served as a storage center and transfer point along a northern trade route of which *Melissa* was also a part.



Fig. 7 Members of the Phlamoudhi Archaeological Project, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002



