Date: Tuesday, 10 December 2013  
Time: 15:00  
Place: RCAC, 3rd floor - 35 seated room

Speaker: Dr. Anna Michailidou, RCAC Visiting Senior Fellow, Research Director Emerita, Institute of Historical Research, NHRF Athens

Title: Balances and Weights in the 'Pre-monetary' Societies of Bronze Age Aegean and Beyond

Abstract: The balance probably predates the invention of balance weights, initially aiming at simply achieving equality between two quantities of products to be transported or distributed. An advance towards the absolute measurement is represented by the use of a series of stones of various interrelated ratios and the current view is that the invention of balance weights was first linked with the weighing of gold. Information on weighing rests on archaeological finds, iconography and texts. During the Bronze Age, from the Indus valley to the Persian Gulf, Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, Anatolia, Cyprus, Egypt and the Aegean, the balance was used to measure the weight of very specific products. Certain commodities became trade goods par excellence and even further they were occasionally used as means of payment, metals in particular. Thus, exchange value came in time to mean 'metal value', which is an almost monetary conception. The Bronze Age Societies in fact represent monetary, albeit pre-coinage, economies and this talk will concentrate on some of the standards used in measuring and recording values, while raising up subjects for further research by the excavators of sites.

Bio: Anna Michailidou studied History and Archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She was awarded a postgraduate fellowship from the Alexandros Onassis Foundation and obtained her Ph.D. in archaeology from the University of Thessaloniki in 1991. She worked as professor Manolis Andronicos' assistant at the University of Thessaloniki, as author and managing editor at Ekdotike Athenon and as a researcher in the National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens. Research Director since 2000, she was named a Deputy Director of the Institute for Greek and Roman Antiquity during the years 2011 - 2012. Since 2013 she is Research Director Emerita in the Institute of Historical Research of the National Hellenic Research Foundation and member of the Committee of Special Account Management of the International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki.

She participates on a regular basis for many years in the excavations at Akrotiri, the prehistoric settlement on the island of Thera (Santorini), and she is currently working on the publication of the metal finds from the site. Anna Michailidou is a member of the Archaeological Society at Athens, of the Hellenic Society of Archaeometry and of the Society for the Study of Ancient Greek Technology.