



Prehistoric Copper Mining in Europe: 5500-500 BC

William O'Brien

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This volume examines prehistoric copper mining in Europe, from the first use of the metal eight thousand years ago in the Balkans to its widespread adoption during the Bronze Age. The history of research is examined, as is the survival of this mining archaeology in different geological settings. There is information on the technological processes of mineral prospecting, ore extraction, and metal production, as well as the logistics and organization of this activity and its environmental impact. The analysis is broadened to consider the economic and societal context of prehistoric copper mining and the nature of the distinctive communities involved.

The study is based on a review of field data and research produced over many decades by the collaboration of archaeologists and geologists in a number of different countries, and covers such famous mining centres as the Mitterberg in Austria, Kargaly in Russia, the Great Orme in Wales, and those in Cyprus, from where the name of this metal derives. These regional studies are brought together for the first time to present a remarkable story of human endeavour and innovation, which marks a new stage in the mastery of our natural resources.

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