

Session title: ISLAND ARCHAEOLOGIES: THEMES AND CHALLENGES

Organizers: Part 1: Island Archaeologies

Krish Seetah, McDonald Institute, Cambridge, UK

Aleks Pluskowski Department of Archaeology, Reading, UK

Part 2: Challenges for Island Archaeology

Helen Dawson, Department of Archaeology, Canterbury,

University of Kent, UK – Forum for Island Research and

Experience, F.I.R.E. coordinator)

Reuben Grima, Heritage Malta, Valletta, Malta

Rebecca Rennell, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, London, UK –

Forum for Island Research and Experience, F.I.R.E. coordinator

Time: Thursday all day

Room:

Session abstract:

Island Archaeology is a fascinating yet often under-represented aspect of archaeological investigation. Nonetheless, the last decade has brought islands into focus as a promising field for the development of archaeological theory and method. A key strength of the island approach is that it encourages productive comparisons between data and models derived from different geographical areas and periods. As Rainbaird (*The Archaeology of Islands* – Cambridge, 2007) suggests, although archaeologists have traditionally considered islands as distinct physical and social entities” is it accurate for us to view islands as (physically or culturally) ‘isolated’? Island archaeologies resonate both of isolation and interaction.

In keeping with the location of the conference, the overall aim of the session is to provide a forum for archaeologists working on islands, exploring the particular methodological issues that working on islands raises, as well as their unique interpretive value. The first part of the session (“Island Archaeologies”) will highlight how they can potentially act as a microcosm for addressing much broader questions, particularly with regard to early seafaring, colonisation, migration, abandonment, resettlement, trade and exchange. The second part of the session (“Challenges for Island Archaeology”) will move the discussion forward, by assessing the field’s achievements to date and potential for development, generating discussion over its strengths and weaknesses. We will ask whether “it really does matter that it’s on an island” or, in other words, whether island settings affect cultural development and, if so, how.

Paper abstracts (Part I):

**EXPLOITING THE STAR OF THE INDIAN OCEAN:
UNDERSTANDING COLONIALISM THROUGH DIET IN POST-
MEDIEVAL MAURITIUS**

Krish Seetah, McDonald Institute, Cambridge, UK

This paper outlines recent research addressing the impacts of colonial activity on an important island enclave in the Indian Ocean. The economic significance of Mauritius, from the medieval to early modern period, as a trading post between the Spice Islands and Europe and subsequently as an established outpost of European imperial powers is testified by the successive waves of Arab, Portuguese, Dutch, French and British colonists.

The research presented here is based on a pilot study looking at late and post-medieval colonial transitions in Mauritius. The research is approached from an important, yet often overlooked marker: diet, and attempts to address an imbalance that I suggest exists in our attention to post-medieval archaeology. Logistical and pragmatic considerations of excavating in this type of environment are outlined. The colonial context of this region is the main focus of the paper and I propose that the location and environmental conditions mean that this project effectively studies a microcosm in which all subsequent transitions, as evidenced through material culture and changes in land use, are as a consequence of colonialism. The evidence and interpretation of this and future work in the region are therefore of significance for studying other colonial contexts from the perspective of trade, consumption and transitions in patterns of land use.

THE STONE AGE OF NORTHERN GREENLAND: THE INDEPENDENCE I CULTURE SETTLEMENT IN THE NORTHERNMOST PART OF THE GLOBE AS AN EXAMPLE OF COLONISATION AND REGIONAL ABANDONMENT

Jens Fog Jensen, Sila - The Greenland Research Centre, Denmark

The prehistory of Greenland is characterised by several migrations and regional extinctions occasionally affecting the whole island, at other times only part of it. The early Stone Age settlement of Peary Land is characterised by the presence of numerous large as well as small campsites enabling genuine studies of settlement patterns, demography and resource use. Recent analysis of Pearylandville, the largest of the campsites, indicate, that all of the settlements actually are the visible remains of a relatively short episode of settlement with aggregation camps used during the cold and dark months, and dispersed single family and task specific camps primarily used during the warmer and light months. The Stone Age settlements of Peary Land thus is a good example of how pioneer hunter-gatherers 'colonize' and domesticate a virgin land by placing large communal settlements in key resource areas and leaving the rest for seasonal and more specialised camps.

ARE WE THERE YET? ISLANDS AT THE EDGE OF THE NEOLITHIC

Jessica Smyth, The Heritage Council, Ireland

A relatively small island on the very edge of Atlantic Europe, Ireland has traditionally been viewed as being one of the last settings for the Neolithic 'revolution', which

seems to have arrived at around 4000 cal BC. With no indigenous fauna larger than wild pig and no cereals, the transportation of wheat and barley seeds, sheep and cattle to the island was an undeniably significant series of events, something that changed how people responded to their environment and how they left their mark on the landscape. However, recent discoveries suggest that far from being an island backwater receiving a slow trickle-down of economic and social change, early Neolithic Ireland was the stage for some very dramatic and dynamic events, some indeed that pre-date similar events occurring in neighbouring Britain. These include the construction of the earliest dated causewayed enclosure in Britain or Ireland, as well as the sudden island-wide appearance (and subsequent disappearance) of rectangular timber houses, smaller than continental examples but robust and distinctive nonetheless. Such evidence poses much broader questions for travel, connection and communication in early prehistoric Europe and in the case of Ireland at least would seem to indicate that being an island didn't matter all that much.

A PLACE OF HISTORY: ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE AT CIDADE VELHA, CAPE VERDE

Christopher Evans. University of Cambridge, UK

First colonised in the 1460s, the Cape Verde Islands eventually became the Portuguese transshipment centre in the Atlantic slave trade and, in their heyday, were one of the great crossroads of the world. Without any indigenous population (very much in contrast with the Canaries), it was a place of 'arrivals' and somewhere that people, things (e.g. plants and animals) and world-views have all come to.

This paper will review the results of the joint Cambridge/Cape Verdean excavation project that has occurred at the Islands' old capital, Cidade Velha, since 2005 and will focus on two themes. First, the importance of considering the establishment of settlement there and its early practice of slaving within a distinctly Late Medieval context (as opposed to the Early Modern perspectives that otherwise dominates such studies). Secondly, within a framework of 'mass arrivals' and the eventual development of a distinctly local creolised identity and (material) culture, it will address aspects of fieldwork practice in such circumstances; particularly how, in effect, archaeology can 'activate' an island history.

TITLE TO BE CONFIRMED

Diego Calaon. Ca'Foscari University, Italy

IN THE SHADOW OF THE WINGED LION: THE IMPACT OF VENETIAN EXPANSION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Aleks Pluskowski, University of Reading, UK

This paper draws on research conducted under the auspices of the "Heritage of the Serenissima" project, to address an important question: to what extent are islands physically and culturally isolated? Focusing on the example of Venice, this paper will demonstrate how material culture can be used to trace the extent of this island's

cultural influence in the eastern Mediterranean. The medieval city of Venice – situated on a series of lagoon islets – sprung from the network of emporia in the Adriatic developing in the latter centuries of the first millennium. The increasing presence of Venetian merchants in self-contained *fondacos* situated at all major Mediterranean trading hubs foreshadowed the political expansion of the Serenissima, which began in earnest with the fall of Constantinople in 1204 at the hands of Frankish and Venetian armies. The image of the winged lion – the quintessential emblem of Venetian political identity from the latter half of the 13th century – subsequently proliferated across the Mediterranean, marking the growing extent of Venetian dominion which adopted a distinct colonial character. The material signatures of Venetian colonisation range from building styles to ceramic types, reflecting both political and cultural influence. In addition to surveying the geographic reach of Venetian influence, this paper will also consider the extent to which this dominion overwhelmed other islands, or whether it was contested.

ISLAND ZMEINYI (LEUKE, FIDONICY, SERPILOR, NORTH-WEST OF BLACK SEA, UKRAINE): DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW PARADIGM OF INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION

Olena Smytyna, Mechnikov National University, Ukraine

The cultural exploration of Zmeinyi refers with the middle of the VII c. BC when in the course of Ancient Greek Colonization of the North Western part of the Black Sea region it was attributed as the sacral place of Achilles' 'life after death'. Since that time the island became an essential part of the living space of populations within this region. Being located on a sea-route crossroads, it has never been a place of permanent inhabitancy, attracting those who provided a service - ritual, military, civil, and scientific.

The first archaeological studies on the island were provided in the mid-19th century, and since that time due to anthropogenic activity much artefactual evidence has been destroyed. Recent studies show high informative capacities of underwater archaeological studies around the island.

More recent explorations have been connected to the intensification of interdisciplinary scientific research on its territory and adjacent underwater space, engaging natural scientists and ecologists interested in studying the island as a cultural and environmental. This paper examines the results of its application to studies of all phases of the Island Zmeinyi cultural exploration by populations from the North-Western Black Sea Region.

ISOTOPIC ANALYSIS OF FAUNAL MATERIAL FROM SOUTH UIST, WESTERN ISLES, SCOTLAND

Rich Madgwick, School of History and Archaeology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Jacqui Mulville, School of History and Archaeology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Tamsin O'Connell, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK

Adrienne Powell, School of History and Archaeology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Niall Sharples School of History and Archaeology, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Rhiannon Stevens, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK

This paper reports on the results from stable $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ isotope analysis of faunal bone collagen from the sites of Bornais, Cladh Hallan and Sligenach on the island of South Uist, Western Isles, Scotland. This preliminary investigation into the isotopic signatures of the fauna is part of a larger project to model the changing nature of interactions between humans, animals and the broader environment in the Western Isles and has the specific aim of elucidating varied feeding regimes for different faunal taxa in specific island environments.

Results demonstrate that data from the island fauna fall within the range of expected values for the UK with the terrestrial herbivorous diets of cattle and sheep confirmed. Pigs are shown to have a distinct isotopic signature, with higher $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values than other taxa, suggesting that at least some of these animals were eating an omnivorous diet. A single red deer $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ value is suggestive of marine protein consumption, for example by grazing on seaweed. The relationship of these results to other later prehistoric and Norse faunal isotopic signatures within Britain is discussed and the implication for the development of a framework of chronological and geographic variation in environment and husbandry strategies in the Western Isles is considered.

TITLE TO BE CONFIRMED

David Barraclough, University of Cambridge, UK

Paper abstracts (Part 2):

ISLAND ARCHAEOLOGY IN GREECE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS, PRACTICES AND CHALLENGERS FOR THE FUTURE

Ina Berg, University of Manchester, UK

Island Archaeology is currently undergoing a phase of self-critical questioning by its practitioners. Having left Darwin, Wallace, and Evans's perceptions behind, most scholars nowadays acknowledge that insularity and isolation are not inevitable outcomes of the physicality of an island, but rather are culturally constructed (Broodbank 2000; Rainbird 2007). In addition, Selwyn's study has further undermined scholarly fascination with islands as special places by demonstrating that they are not useful analytical categories (1980) and that both land and island settings can be analysed using the same approaches. Still, scholars continue to use the label 'island archaeology' (as opposed to simply 'archaeology') to describe their distinct research outlook. Having discarded insularity and isolation as concepts specific to islands, the focus has now shifted to the sea that surrounds them and makes them, many would argue, into a qualitatively different world than, for example, an oasis in a desert. If this is so, then islands are indeed special places that warrant unique theoretical underpinnings. If, however, this is an illusion, then practitioners will start to re-think their approach. This paper thus looks at whether the sea can be used as a mark of

distinction and, if this is so, what approaches might prove fruitful to further our understanding of islands.

THE ANTIKYTHERA SURVEY PROJECT

Andrew Bevan, University College London, UK and James Conolly, Trent University, Canada

While many Mediterranean islands have been subjected to archaeological survey methods of one kind or another, until now, few if any have been covered in both a comprehensive and intensive manner. In this paper, we discuss results from an intensive survey of the Greek island of Antikythera (the Antikythera Survey Project – ASP) and demonstrate how full investigation of a tiny, remote and very sparsely populated island brings a range of analytical advantages. Some of the benefits are methodological, related to simplified sampling procedures, but others are bring more substantive insight and offer a striking picture of repeated episodes of human colonisation and abandonment, changing connections with the wider world, as well as diverse and occasionally idiosyncratic ways of life.

DEFINING AN ‘UNKNOWN’ ISLAND: HARRIS AND THE SHIANT ISLES

Kevin Colls, University of Birmingham, UK

The archaeology of the Western Isles has been the subject of sporadic study throughout the last century and has attracted the attentions of scholars and antiquarians alike. It was only in the latter part of the 20th century that the understanding of ‘heritage’ became more closely associated with less obvious visible remains from the past: The Isle of Harris, with its lack of upstanding monuments, has been excluded from research, with study honing in on the seemingly more impressive remains on the other Hebridean islands. The extreme topography that Harris offers – from steep mountains to machair – in which earlier settlement remains have been subsumed under peat or sand; is part of the reason that little attempt had been made to undertake a systematic analysis of the current Harris landscape. In response a multi-discipline approach has been undertaken, including GIS, field-walking, excavation, place-names/reminiscence survey, geophysics, in order to assess the archaeological resource and interpret the ‘island-scape’. Several factors combine on Harris that creates a microcosm of potential for study, but also poses interesting yet problematic issues in how to complete the investigations. The results highlight the question of whether island archaeology should be a sub-discipline within the field of study.

ISLANDS AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN WESTERN FRANCE: SUMMARY OF A VERY LONG LOVE STORY...

Marie-Yvane Daire and Anna Baudry, UMR 6566 «CReAAH: Centre de Recherche en Archéologie, Archéosciences, Histoire», Laboratoire Archéosciences, Université de Rennes I, France

With its 1770 km of coasts and its 850 islands and small islands, the area Brittany (France) offers a formidable potential of study in the field of coastal and insular archaeology. The researchers of the area federated within a work group specifically dedicated to this set of themes (AMARAI) (1), group itself affiliated with a structure of federator research in the West of France (UMR 6566 CReAAH) (2).

This paper aims to underline certain specific aspects of islands archaeology, through the multiple researches developed for several decades in Western France:

- The diversified archaeological potential is due to the fact that the coastal strip, as a whole, was intensively settled at all the times;
- The excellent state of conservation of the archaeological remains (buildings, fauna...), especially on small islands is explained, on the one hand, by the lesser anthropic pressure compared to the continent coastal area (agricultural and tourist) and, in the other hand, by the numerous and efficient protection measures (environmental);
- Nevertheless, technical difficulties related to the insular situation (accessibility, material work conditions ...) leads researchers to federate their field actions.

These observations will be illustrated by some excavations and research projects (recent and in progress) on Iron Age archaeological sites, opening the discussion to wider and universal questions, such as:

- Evolution of the coastal landscape (variations of the coastline and the marine level)
- Condition of life for coastal populations versus islanders
- The role played by the islands in the trade relationships and contacts by sea routes.

(1) AMARAI : « Association Manche Atlantique pour la Recherche Archéologique dans les Îles » <http://www.amarai.asso.univ-rennes1.fr/>

(2) UMR 6566 « CReAAH », Rennes (France): <http://www.archeologie.univ-rennes1.fr/>

THE HUNTER, THE SHEPHERD, THE FARMER: THE TALE OF A VILLAGE

Evangelos Kyriakidis, University of Kent, UK

A lot of research in island archaeology has focused on the evolving and adapting strategies for survival and subsistence, a cardinal aspect of what is often called "social complexity" but also an illuminating way to describe the life of people in the past. Each period, in archaeological narrative, sees specific and differing climatic conditions, population sizes and new technologies aimed at improving people's lives and helping them adapt to the changing social and natural environments. For analytical purposes we have, rightly in many ways, presented each period as a monolithic category with a certain type of settlement that is characteristic and is successfully adapting to the new situations. We should be aware however that the various, yet contemporary, patterns of land/sea ownership, the history of different groups of the population and their respective identities, the micro-environmental situations, the uneven dispersal of technologies, old and new, as well as other factors

create a much more varied picture. What we call, for example, hunting and gathering as a life-style and a subsistence strategy is used by large parts of the otherwise agricultural population as complementary to other strategies, whereas full-scale hunter-gatherer communities live side by side with entirely sedentary populations. These social groups didn't just live parallel lives but strongly interrelated ones, with significant overlaps in their conceptual frameworks despite their huge differences. Island archaeology is, in some ways, a type of archaeology in a 'messy' lab and is therefore an ideal forum to air such objections.

CYCLES OF ISOLATION AND INTERACTION OF THE MALTESE ARCHIPELAGO FROM THE NEOLITHIC TO THE BRONZE AGE WITHIN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN

Giulia Recchia, Università di Foggia, Dipartimento di Scienze Umane, Italy – Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta

Valentina Copat, Università di Roma I – Sapienza, Italy

Michela Danesi, Università di Roma I – Sapienza, Italy

The alternation of phases characterised by strong interaction between the Maltese archipelago and the adjacent areas and phases of isolation was highlighted by various authors: probably it is better understandable taking into consideration wider phenomena implying other small islands in the central Mediterranean. Small islands could be interesting case studies to analyze in circumscribed places not only the effects of external relationships, but also the innovative potential and the cultural expansive capability sometimes shown by them. Authors set themselves the objective to recognize similarities and differences between the Maltese archipelago and other small islands of the central Mediterranean in the transformation of the relationships with the Italian peninsula and the large islands, aiming at understanding phenomena as cultural receptivity, reworking, autonomy, creation of new models.

The authors take into consideration, besides the Maltese archipelago, the Aeolian islands, the couple Lampedusa/Pantelleria and the Campanian islands (Capri, Procida-Vivara, Ischia). They consider as starting point the hypothesis that there is a similar cycle, even if it is not everywhere contemporary, of interaction – abandon/isolation – interaction with an active role of the small islands between these and the Italian peninsula/Sicily. The authors aim at analysing and comparing features and causes of each phase.

ISLANDS WITHIN ISLANDS: CONSTRUCTING A NEOLITHIC ISLANDSCAPE

Reuben Grima, Heritage Malta, Malta

Recent literature on the archaeology of islands has increasingly emphasised how cultural attitudes to island environments are no less important than the biogeographic realities of those environments in shaping island worlds and identities.

This paper approaches the question of whether and how the island setting affected cultural development on the Maltese archipelago during the late Neolithic,

by re-examining the interplay between geographic and cultural factors in the social construction and ordering of the archipelago.

The dynamics of this interplay will be placed in a broader diachronic context in order to identify long-term processes of aggregation and fragmentation in the ordering of the islandscape, the changing configuration of cultural 'islands' within the archipelago, and the changing dynamics of connectivity and interaction between them.

This case will be used to illustrate some methodological opportunities and challenges posed by island settings, which may be of wider relevance.

'INSULAR ARCHAEOLOGY': ISLANDS IN ISOLATION

Anke Marsh-Cross, University College London, UK

When considering the theoretical/methodological approach that should be used in island studies, three related issues need to be addressed: 1) the concepts of insularity and isolation, which influence our perceptions of island life and peoples, 2) the temptation to limit archaeological investigation within seemingly obvious boundaries, and 3) how biogeographical methodology has been removed from its context and applied blindly to island cultural studies. These concepts serve to perpetuate the myth of islands in isolation. The focus of archaeological investigation is therefore necessarily restricted by physical and perceived boundaries and as such shifts the emphasis away from the human element.

A different approach needs to be developed. We propose there should be further integration of disciplines focusing on maritime culture, the relationship between humans and the sea, and treating islands as part of a whole unit of interaction.

WHY ISLAND ARCHAEOLOGY?

Helen Dawson, University of Kent, UK – Forum for Island Research and Experience, University College London, UK

The rising number of conferences and publications dedicated to Island Archaeology in recent years stands witness to the growing popularity of the subject. Islands are now a recurrent feature not just in archaeological studies, but - to name but a few - also in anthropology, ethnography, and popular culture (music, poetry, visual arts, etc). To what extent is the island specialism justified by the geographic and cultural characteristics and assumed peculiarities of islands, and how much is this popularity an academic construct, rooted in western tradition? This paper will address this issue, by presenting the results of a questionnaire sent out to island archaeologists and researchers (including some actual islanders).