

LIFE WAVES – APRIL 16th – 17th 2009
The University of Manchester

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND ABSTRACTS.

PATHWAVES OF CONTACT

Thursday 16th April

Discussant – Muiris O’Sullivan (University College Dublin)

INTRODUCTORY PAPER

Muiris O’Sullivan
University College Dublin.

ABSTRACT TO FOLLOW

Somewhere beyond the sea: modelling contact across the Irish Sea in the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic

Vicki Cummings
University of Central Lancashire

Traditional considerations of interactions across the Irish Sea in early prehistory suggest that people were not in contact in the late Mesolithic, evidenced by different lithic styles in Britain and Ireland. By the early Neolithic, however, there is clear evidence of contact, with shared monument forms and material culture, and the movement of specific resources across the sea. In this paper I want to critically reconsider this approach to the late Mesolithic and early Neolithic, and instead emphasise the experience of living in this particular part of the world. I will discuss new fieldwork being conducted in Kintyre, the closest point between Britain and Ireland, and suggest some alternatives to the traditional interpretation of contact at this time.

Middle Bronze Age pottery production: some results and further considerations

Jos Kleijne
University of Sheffield
Leiden University

At this lecture I will give an overview on the preliminary results of research on Bronze Age pottery from several sites in the Netherlands and Southern Britain. The focus will be on the production of pottery and the related social issues involved (cf. Gosselain 2000). This study is concerned with the Biconical Urn – Deverel Rimbury phenomenon (2000-1200 BC) on both sides of the North Sea (*i.a.* the well known Dutch Hilversum-culture (cf. Theunissen 1999)). Comparison will be made with recent results on the production of pottery in Bronze Age France (Manem 2008).

From a larger perspective, following the interesting revival of culture history, relating people explicitly to pots again (of which Sheridan 2008 for this particular region is the most explicit example, but certainly more can be found), I want to bring a new emphasis on material culture, taking theoretical notions of the relationship between material culture, technology and society (*e.g.* Dobres/Hoffman 1994) into the debate.

Dobres, M./C.R. Hoffman 1994. Social Agency and the Dynamics of Prehistoric Technology, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 1, 211-258.

Gosselain, O.P. 2000. Materializing Identities: An African Perspective, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 7, 187-217.

Manem, S. 2008. *Les Fondements Technologiques de la Culture des Duffaits (Âge du Bronze Moyen)*, Paris (unpublished PhD Thesis Université de Paris X / Université de Nanterre).

Sheridan, J.A., 2008. Upper Largie and Scottish – Dutch connections during the Beaker Period. In: Fokkens, H./B.J. Coles/A.L. Van Gijn/J.P. Kleijne/H.H. Ponjee/C.G. Slappendel(eds), 2008. *Between*

Foraging and Farming: An extended broad spectrum of papers presented to Leendert Louwe Kooijmans, Leiden (Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia 40), 247-260.

Theunissen, E.M. 1999. *Midden-bronstijdsamenlevingen in het Zuiden van de Lage Landen; een evaluatie van het begrip 'Hilversum-cultuur'*, Leiden.

The Western Seaways: myth or reality?

Chris Scarre
Durham University

The concept of the 'Western Seaways' has been a recurrent feature of studies of Atlantic European archaeology for over a century. Sites and finds from far-flung regions have been linked by arrows on maps. Are we then dealing here with 'maritime communities'? Was long-distance travel a recurrent practice or a rare and unusual phenomenon? A brief history of the 'Western Seaways' will be followed by discussion of the archaeological and ethnographic evidence for widespread patterns of contact. The role of islands and headlands as nodes within networks is particularly noteworthy but the distinctive features of island archaeology reveal as much about the sea as they do about the land. The reality, significance and impact of longer-distance connections remains problematic.

What has the Sea got to do with Style?

Irene Garcia Rovira
University of Manchester.

Material correlations observed from areas often separated by sea have been, on many occasions, treated as potential evidence for contact between distant areas. Whilst during the first half of the 20th century, stylistic similarities sought to be result of cultural proximity (e.g. Montelius 1910, Mendes Correa 1924, Childe 1926), with the dawn of the New Archaeology and the influence of certain theoretical perspectives such as structuralism, such correlations were generally perceived as result of universal phenomena (e.g. Renfrew 1973, Lewis Williams & Dowson 1993).

Nowadays, not much debate contemplates discussion around material patterns, at least when it comes to well-known topics; in this case the 'megalithic phenomenon'. Some authors have suggested the possibility for contacts between distant areas separated by sea (e.g. Eogan 1989, 1997, 1999) and at certain stages, for instance at the 'Megalithic Symposium' of 1992, these suggestions appeared to concern many researchers working on this area (see Munoz Amilibia 1993). Although interesting, none of this research has been able to overcome some of the most rooted concepts and 'ways of doing' that impregnated this topic during most 20th century.

This paper aims to analyse this apparent theoretical collapse through an exercise of de-construction. Firstly, it is necessary to move down to the foundations of the debate in order to re-consider the very nature of the materials used to study the past by archaeologists and consequently to consider in depth those questions surrounding the understandings and uses of style. It is hoped to bring to light the lack of attention paid by archaeologists on the relation between style and temporality. Secondly, R. Wilk's model of 'common difference' (2004) is discussed in consideration with the topic concentrating on a specific spatial and temporal context. To conclude, I will stress the importance of the invigoration of this topic in order to be able to create newer and fresher narratives about a past that has recently been perceived as naively static.

CONSTRUCTING SALT WATER IDENTITIES

Friday 17th April

Discussant – Tim Ingold (University of Aberdeen)

Watery Worlds: contemporary Keralan perspectives

Jesse Ransley
University of Southampton

Drawing on anthropological research in present day Kerala (south-western India), this paper will reflect on the multivalent relations between people and their watery world in Munruthuruthu, a boat-building

village in the backwaters of Ashtamudi Estuary.

It will explore the ways in which people and place are made in Munruthuruthu, where people's experience of, and movement through, the world is shaped by water. The world is not lived with a bounded distinction between land and water. This unproblematic, everyday inhabitation of a watery world blurs these categories physically, conceptually and experientially, and place is conceived through movement and experience of the world. Moreover, movement, 'work', and being-in-the-world, produce not just place but also identities. Just as people shape their world physically and conceptually, it shapes them. They are made socially and physiologically through work and experience of the world, through an embodied, intimate knowledge.

This complex tangle of mutually-transformative, meaning-creation relations between people, boats and watery place which produces the world of Munruthuruthu, will be examined in order to offer some insight into the ways in which we imagine the making of place and identity in other watery worlds. For example, the paper will consider whether the tendency to see watery places as liminal (and therefore either peripheral/marginal or transformative and even divisive) is a product of our modern, western and inherently land-based understanding of the world? Does this reflect a conception of land and water as opposing binary forces? Finally, whilst Munruthuruthu can reveal something of our own conceptual boundaries and notions of watery place and identity, it is not a 'saltwater' or even 'maritime' community. So, beyond all of this, it also speaks to the importance of case-specificity, and the still pertinent question of whether the categories we impose, watery or not, are of relevance to the communities we are studying. Should we be hoping to *construct saltwater identities*?

Dancing Seamanships

Cesar Enrique Giraldo Herrera
University of Aberdeen

The south-western littoral of Colombia on the eastern seaboard of the equatorial Pacific is a dynamic labyrinth: on the inside are estuaries governed by moderately strong tides and the slow mangrove growth; on the outside is the sea with its warm superficial waters, movable sandy keys and highly variable soft winds. Although not excessively risky, these environments are of an extremely changeable character, posing ever challenging problems to 'western' navigation which often has to draw on 'local knowledge' to cope with them. Contrary to the assumptions that central Government and developmental agencies derive from their transport difficulties, local people enjoy high mobility and dense interconnection thanks to their reliance on traditional small watercraft technologies and, given the characteristics of the latter, on seamanship: the social and dynamic structures enacted through corporal and perceptual techniques and skills; practices that enable seamen to dwell on the sea.

Traditional dances and festivities such as *Los arrullos de la Virgen del Carmen* are a crucial aspect of local seamanship. In these festivities a mimesis of the environment and its dwelling practices is unknowingly performed: a) The traditional music produced by musicians, singers and dancers simulates the sound that envelops their everyday dwelling activities, b) the spatial organization of the dance room mimics the structure of the environment and the referential frames used to navigate, c) the relations between musicians replicate the interactions of the crew, and d) the dances emulate some of the most important body techniques necessary for habitation and movement on the sea. Through this mimesis the community shares and collectively processes embodied information about their surroundings. Analysis of the constitutive practices of seamanship in the littoral zone, and of the mimesis performed in the festivities, allows us to understand the embodied cognition of these environments and how these practices are immersed in local cosmology and processes of identity formation.

Sea on Land, Land at Sea: Boats, Burnt Mounds, and the Creation of Land-Sea Interrelationships in the Shetland Isles.

Lauren Doughton
University of Manchester

In this paper I intend to explore the potential of burnt mound sites for illuminating the complex relationships between land and sea. Taking the burnt mound sites of Shetland as my starting point I will argue that our current understanding of such sites as locations for either cooking or saunas are, at best, over simplified. Rather, I will suggest that such sites, although employing a single set of technologies, may often have a complex and varied set of outcomes. Looking at the locational contexts and recent excavations of a number of sites in the Shetland isles I will argue that one such application may have been the construction of boats. Furthermore, I will argue that through the processes involved in the creation of these vessels these sites may provide the key to understanding the relationships between land and water on the islands, and may help to deconstruct the unhelpful land/water dichotomy which continues to plague our perceptions of maritime based communities

‘The [prehistoric] ship as the heterotopia *par excellence*’

Robert Van de Noort
University of Exeter

Michel Foucault’s concept of the ‘heterotopia’ provides a theoretical framework for developing an understanding of how the social networks onboard ships were enacted and performed (1966/1984). Applying post-structural principles, Foucault considers the heterotopia the opposite of the utopia. Thus, whereas utopias have no real place and portray society in a perfected form or as a ‘society turned upside down’, the heterotopias are real places in which society is simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.

Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia has become a powerful meme in social science, but has, as far as I have been able to ascertain, never been used in maritime archaeology, either for mariners or coastal dwellers. This is rather surprising, not in the least as he described ‘the ship as the heterotopia *par excellence*’. Admittedly, Foucault only considered in this quote the ships from the 16th century onwards, but I would argue that seagoing ships in prehistory would similarly have acted as heterotopia. After all, this was the means by which dreams were kept alive and performed, through explorations that connected people across seas into networks, from as early as the Neolithic. Seafaring was, throughout prehistory, the means through which society was simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted, for example through the trade and exchange of exotic goods that became so important in the material culture of the prehistoric past.

I will develop these ideas further by returning to my ‘Argonauts of the North Sea’ (Van de Noort 2006), a study of the ritualised aspects of long-distance travel through the contextualisation of the sewn-plank boats of the Bronze Age. By (re-)connecting the products of early seafaring with the practice of seafaring, something of the ritual of travel could be unraveled, leading to some thoughts on the social practices and performances that took place on board the ships during the journeys across the sea, and how this represented, contested, and inverted aspects of the societies on land.

Foucault, M. 1966/1984. ‘The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences’ (lecture presented in 1966, first published as *Des Espace Autres* in *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* in 1984)

Van de Noort, R. 2006. Argonauts of the North Sea. A Social Maritime Archaeology for the 2nd Millennium BC. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 72, 2006, pp. 267-287; (full text freely available on: <http://eric.exeter.ac.uk/exeter/handle/10036/20060>)

The Two Seas: Archaic Mediterranean Sea Between Phoenician and Greek Ship-Building Tradition.

Francesco Tiboni
Leicester University

Naval archaeology of the pre and proto-historical Mediterranean sea allows us to argue the existence, between the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age, of two different spheres of technical influence in ship building technologies, well-expressed and clearly recognizable, both coming from the Eastern part of the basin.

Starting at least from the 10th century BC, and up to the first half of the 6th century BC, the growing of sea trades on one hand, the first activities linked to the colonization of the western area on the other hand, seem to have been the occasions for those sailors coming from Phoenician and Greek areas to establish the first ports of trade along western coasts and islands of the Mediterranean sea.

During this time, together with raw materials and goods we have a lot of people sailing from the East to the West, bringing new cultures, new religions and, of course, new technologies with them.

From the nautical point of view, during this period we can put in light many changes in western shipbuilding technologies. The analysis of the archaeological and cultural landscapes, the study of the new Mediterranean seascape and the discovery of a little number of ancient wrecks allow us to suppose that all these changes can be read as a consequence of two main causes.

First of all the “*Darwinian evolution*” of the hulls: the struggle for sea trade supremacy in the West has to be considered a great motivation for the introduction of those foreign useful solutions in the local shipbuilding technologies.

Besides, the new born process of colonization: the construction of new and more complex *ethnoi* on western coasts and lands (i.e. Italy, Africa, France or Spain) expresses itself even in ‘new and mixed’ shipbuilding technologies.

In fact, while the ships of the western area (Sardinia, Northern Africa or Spain) seem to introduce new technical solutions coming from the Phoenician shipbuilding tradition, the Adriatic area as well as the Tyrrhenian area of the Italian Peninsula and Southern France seem to introduce new technical elements coming from Greece.

In this piece I would like to demonstrate that we have many evidences of these two cultural and technological spheres of influence, especially in naval archaeology.

TO BE AT SEA **Friday 17th April**

Discussant – Alasdair Whittle (Cardiff University)

Learning about the sea

Fraser Sturt

University of Southampton.

Discerning the role and significance of activities on and in the water during the Mesolithic and Neolithic of what today we term the British isles is difficult at best. We have no boats to typologise, or to consider the characteristics of, and only a fragmentary view of what must have constituted broader everyday life on land. Furthermore, the sea represent a space with which few researchers have such intimate knowledge of when compared to the land. As such, we not only need to think carefully about how we create accounts of life on the waters edge, what knowledge basis we consider pertinent, but also about how we view these in relation to terrestrial bound practice too. This paper focuses on what we can learn about Mesolithic society through rethinking our understandings of environment and culture to integrate both land and water into single accounts. In particular, it will be stressed that through focusing on the marine zone first researchers are forced to adopt a more flexible and responsive view of context, knowledge and skill.

Seeing Sea and Self: The making of persons and places in the Mesolithic of the Irish Sea basin

Hannah Cobb

University of Manchester

Understanding how people understood the sea, and their relationship with this in the British Mesolithic is problematic. There are no boats that date from the period, and in coastal areas such as the Irish Sea basin, the presence of very different lithic traditions has been interpreted as reflecting regional

insularity and therefore a lack of sea travel. On the other hand, the Mesolithic shell middens of western Scotland, with their sometimes monumental size and the inclusions of human bone within the midden material have become the focus of debate regarding the transformative power of the liminal zone between land and sea. In the northern Irish Sea area, on which this paper will concentrate, this view has resulted in the development of a polarity in which the sea is presented on the one hand as a conceptual boundary and on the other as having powerful, spiritual, transformative powers. Either way, land is pitted against sea in a very modern sense. Instead, this paper argues for an alternative perspective which draws upon the material to consider the rich and complicated ways in which people and places were continually made and reconfigured through their relationship with the sea in the Mesolithic of the Irish Sea basin.

Different, but the same: revisiting the sea-land dichotomy.

Ina Berg

University of Manchester

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, Sewlyn'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.

Applying Island Studies: Islands and Islandscape as a context for analysis in Island Studies.

Mike Moloney

University of Southampton

This paper presents evidence to contest the argument of Boomert and Bright (2007) that island societies should not be considered as different from mainland coastal societies, by archaeologists. By reviewing ways in which maritime archaeology can use the concept of islandscape to examine assemblages found in, or related to island contexts, it not only shows that far more information can be obtained about the island culture itself when considering the material in this way, but suggests how this new approach can be applied to future maritime island sites. The resulting conclusion is that by examining maritime island assemblages with the 'lens' of islandscape, and using islands as a context for analysis, maritime archaeologists can contribute to island studies beyond the point of merely explaining their coastal culture as a geographical variant of mainland coastal cultures.

Salt, sea and land resources in the prehistory of the Trieste Karst (north-eastern Italy)

Manuela Montagnari Kokelj

University of Trieste

The Trieste Karst is located at the north-western edge of the Balkans, in the northernmost corner of the eastern Adriatic coast. It is an area of low rounded hills and plateaux, bordered by alluvial plains to the west (the Friuli Plain) and to the south-east (the Istria peninsula). The Karst is particularly rich in caves, and almost all the archaeological evidence from the Palaeolithic to the Early Bronze Age comes from caves. Specific research projects carried out since the 1990's combined traditional studies of materials from old excavations, aimed at defining the local chronological sequence from the transition Mesolithic-Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age, with interdisciplinary studies, mainly sedimentological, soil micro-morphological and petrographical analyses.

Among the main results of these studies there was the recognition of a relative discontinuity in the use of the Karst area, which might be connected with a specialized subsistence system: pastoralism. A key factor in the practice of pastoralism is the availability of salt. The geo-environmental conditions of the territory close to Trieste and northern Istria are particularly suitable for the formation of natural salt deposits: indeed, saline have represented one of the basic economic resources of the north-eastern Adriatic coasts since at least the beginning of the Venetian Republic, in the 8th century AD, till few decades ago, or even to the present in certain cases. On the grounds of direct and indirect indicators of salt exploitation/production with particular attention to the archaeological correlates detectable in the main prehistoric sites, such as rare, foreign valuables, the hypothesis of an early use of this precious resource, possibly already in the Neolithic, has recently been made. In this paper this hypothesis will be further examined by focusing on continuity/discontinuity in using both land and sea resources in the Mesolithic and in later periods.

Title to be Announced

Colin Richards

University of Manchester

Abstract Forthcoming.