

The Archaeology of Islands

Archaeologists have traditionally considered islands as distinct physical and social entities. In this book, Paul Rainbird discusses the historical construction of this characterisation and questions the basis for such an understanding of island archaeology. Through a series of case studies of prehistoric archaeology in the Mediterranean, Pacific, Baltic and Atlantic seas and oceans, he argues for a decentering of the land in favour of an emphasis on the archaeology of the sea and, ultimately, a new perspective on the making of maritime communities. The archaeology of islands is thus unshackled from approaches that highlight boundedness and isolation, and is replaced with a new set of principles – that boundaries are fuzzy, islanders are distinctive in their expectation of contacts with people from over the seas and island life can tell us much about maritime communities. Debating islands, thus, brings to the fore issues of identity and community and a concern with Western construction of other peoples.

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■ **PAUL RAINBIRD**

University of Wales, Lampeter



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For Sarah and Cerys

Contents

<i>Figures</i>	<i>page</i> xiii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
I A Consciousness of the Earth and Ocean: The Creation of Islands	1
‘Full fathom five’: islands in Western history	4
Suffering a seachange: islands in popular literature	6
Imaginary islands	11
Islands of the dead	12
Prison and plantation islands	15
Insiders and outsiders	18
Shores and lines on a map – boundaries and scale	19
Islands in a world of perceptions	23

CONTENTS

2	Seas of Islands: Anthropology, Biogeography, Archaeology and Postcolonialism	26
	Islands and anthropology	26
	Islands and biogeography	30
	Archaeology and island biogeography	32
	Islands and the postcolonial critique	39
	Small worlds and big issues – microcosms	42
	Conclusion	45
3	An Archaeology of the Sea	46
	Maritime cultural landscapes	47
	Mariners and maritime communities	49
	Being on the seas	53
	The sea(s) and phenomenology	57
	Material culture, gender and practical experience	59
	Intimate relations	62
	Archaeologies of the sea(s)	63
	Facing the sea	65
4	The Mediterranean: Malta	68
	Malta	68
	Seas within seas	79
	Back to Malta	87
5	Oceania: Pohnpei and the Eastern Carolines	90
	Island histories in Oceania	91
	Micronesia	95
	Polynesia	109
	Fusion	113
6	The Baltic: Gotland	114
	Gotland	114
	Mesolithic Gotland	117
	Pigs on Gotland	121
	Pitted Ware period	123

Bronze Age Gotland	126
Ship-settings	128
Iron Age Gotland	131
The Baltic Sea	134
Conclusion	137
7 Atlantic Archipelago: The Western Seaways of Europe	139
Western seaways	142
Mesolithic prelude?	144
Arrivals (and departures?)	145
'Attention all shipping' – Bronze Age boats	155
Iron Age seasiders	158
Irish Sea/Mediterranean Sea	161
8 Conclusion – Islands and Histories of the Sea	163
Communities in the field	164
The archaeology of islands	167
The archaeologies of the seas	172
<i>References</i>	175
<i>Index</i>	193

Figures

1	Landing place, Lundy, Bristol Channel, UK	<i>page</i> 14
2	Bridge to the Isle of Skye under construction, Scotland, UK	21
3	Hagar Qim, Malta	34
4	Le Pinnacle, Jersey	55
5	People of the sea meet those of the land. Volos, Greece	65
6	Map of the Mediterranean Sea	69
7	Map of Malta	70
8	'Altar', Tarxien, Malta	77
9	Map of the Western Pacific	96
10	Map of Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia	99
11	Nan Douwas, Nan Madol, Pohnpei	103
12	Map of the Baltic Sea	115
13	Map of Gotland	116
14	Rannarve ship-setting, Klint, Gotland	130

FIGURES

15	Map of the Atlantic Archipelago	140
16	Pentre Ifan, Pembrokeshire, Wales, UK	147
17	Ailsa Craig, Firth of Clyde, Scotland, UK	149
18	Stowed <i>currachs</i> , Dingle Peninsula, Ireland	156

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