

### **Island Exchanges. First Meeting of the DFG Island Studies Network**

**Veranstalter:** DFG Island Studies Network. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Island Exchanges, Environments, and Perceptions

**Datum, Ort:** 11.11.2011–12.11.2021, digital (Tübingen)

**Bericht von:** Miriam Kroiher, Philosophische Fakultät, Fachbereich Geschichte, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

LAURA DIERKSMEIER (Tübingen) and FRERICH SCHÖN (Tübingen), coordinators of the Island Studies Network, opened their first meeting with an overview of the fields represented by the network, including anthropology, archaeology, geography, history, literature studies, philology, and sociology. The overarching theme of the meeting, island exchanges, was contextualised in the frame of the Island Studies Network: As geologically disconnected spaces, islands have over centuries served as safe havens for refugees, as locations to isolate prisoners, or as monastic retreats. At the same time, islands were highly connected via their border with the sea, whether it be as refuelling stations for conquest battles, as prey locations for piracy, or as hubs in trade networks – exchanging agriculture, cultural objects, and knowledge. Due to their key locations at cultural crossroads, it is not a coincidence that a larger proportion of world heritage sights are located on islands, nor that some of the first newspapers were launched on islands.

HELEN DAWSON (Berlin/Bologna) opened the circle of presentations by addressing the question whether islands are in fact different from the mainland, which most people assume. As she pointed out, the question of difference always depends on the perspective. Mostly, islands are seen from a mainland point of view, which can lead to problems like overseeing phenomena, such as seasonal mobility to islands, rotation or exchange networks and only focusing on established island settlements. Criteria that most islands have in common are that they are a well-defined space as well as an in-between space and that exchange was essential to island life. This exchange mostly

took place without a clear centre, which led to so-called small world networks.

An island can be seen as the mainland as well, as ANNA KOUREMENOS (Hamden) showed with the example of Crete in Graeco-Roman period and its surrounding islands, Gavdos, Leuke, Antikythera and Kythira. The satellite islands were clearly aware of their islandness, whereas people in Crete could have felt like they were living on the mainland. This island group depended on a huge network of trade exchange; importing goods such as wine, terra sigillata, or slaves; exporting olive oil, medicinal plants, and murex. As a central part of the presentation, the question of island visibility marked the discussion, as the phenomenon of small satellite islands around a larger island is a typical geographical feature and not unique to the Mediterranean.

MARTIN BARTELHEIM (Tübingen) continued the topic of trade and exchange on islands by analysing metal production and exchange on Bronze Age Cyprus. Located in the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus was one of various copper production sites in the region, but the only place located on an island. This fact made Cyprus a major point for trade and exchange. Evidence from shipwrecks shows that metal was transported together with other products like blue glass, gold etc., which leads to the thesis that the ships did not chart a monidirectional course but were likely travelling around the Mediterranean to various locations.

Expanding the time period under analysis up to the present, CHRISTIAN DEPRAETERE (Montpellier) gave a comparative geohistorical analysis of water importations on different European Islands, taking as his examples: Samos (Greece), Ischia (Italy), Porquerolles (France) and Borkum (Germany). In general, islands usually suffer from water deficits, whereas there is a surplus on the mainland. Solutions for this problem differed from place to place, but one expensive and cumbersome solution is often transport of drinking water from aqueducts in large ships. The question of water access has always been a problem and will be a major issue in the future, making it even more necessary to encourage cooperation between different countries.

---

Going back to the Early Bronze Age, MATTEO CANTISANI (Bochum) presented his current research project on southern Sicily, focussing on resources and their symbolic meaning. With a focus on clay, he addressed local ceramic recipes as a signature of an interpenetrated world of substances, social collectives and individuals. He aims to analyse interactions of human societies with their landscapes.

MONIKA BARGET (Maastricht/Mainz) moved the focus from being on the islands themselves to knowledge about islands in mainland Europe, especially in 18th-century Germany. Whereas only a minority of people visited them, islands featured in different media from maps to entertainment literature and specialist dictionaries. The flourishing print and translation cultures popularised island knowledge across Europe, often reflecting commercial interests and political debates. One particularly valuable island source are dictionaries published for the use of travelling salespersons as they cover many smaller islands (e.g. where cargo ships could anchor). Different considerations of island knowledge were gathered and evaluated in well-connected expert communities while more general island knowledge began to transcend social boundaries.

MARTA DÍAZ-ZORITA BONILLA (Tübingen) provided insight into the ongoing excavation project at the Biniadrís cave at Menorca, Spain. Bioarchaeological records show that people on Menorca had a sustainable lifestyle, with enough resources to survive without outside assistance. However, different features in the funerary settings like pottery or jewellery confirm Mediterranean, mostly western, connections. Future investigations and isotope analyses will concentrate on the question of mobility.

The conference was complimented with presentations by PHILIP HAYWARD (Sydney) and ADAM GRYDEHØJ (Guangzhou/Kopenhagen) on publishing in *Island Study Journals* (*Shima* and *Island Studies Journal*), followed by a lively exchange and plans for joint network conference presentations, special journal issues, and publications. Finally, Monika Barget, specialist for the digital humanities, introduced

Zotero and Microsoft teams to strengthen the network's digital collaboration.

Overall, the first meeting of the DFG Island Studies Network has reflected that research on island exchanges has been focused for many years on commercial questions, but that in the last years, the field of study regarding exchange has been amplified to questions of culture, communication, and mobility. Within the theoretical aspect of island studies, an important aspect that all members agree to keep working on is the question of visibility of islands and knowledge of „islandness.“

#### **Conference overview:**

Frerich Schön / Laura Dierksmeier (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen): Opening remarks

Helen Dawson (Freie Universität Berlin / Università di Bologna): Are islands „different“? An exploration of prehistoric exchange networks and their effects on small Mediterranean islands

Anna Kouremenos (Western Connecticut State University / Quinnipiac University): Trade and exchange in southern Greece

Martin Bartelheim (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen): Bronze Age metal production and exchange on Cyprus

Christian Depraetere (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, Montpellier): A geo-historical glimpse on water importations on islands. Examples from fringing islands of the European continent

Matteo Cantisani (Ruhr-Universität Bochum): Clays, humans and the landscape in Copper Age-Early Bronze Sicily

Philip Hayward (University of Technology Sydney / Editor of *Shima*): Publishing in *Shima*

Adam Grydehøj (South China University Guangzhou / Editor-in-chief of the *Island Studies Journal*): Publishing in the *Island Studies Journal* (ISJ)

Monika Barget (Maastricht University / Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte Mainz): Goods, people, ideas – island exchanges in early modern Europe

Marta Díaz-Zorita Bonilla (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen): Bioarchaeology of the longue durée at the Biniadrís cave (Menorca)

Monika Barget: Introduction to Zotero and Microsoft Teams

Laura Dierksmeier / Frerich Schön: Planning for subsequent meetings in Hamburg (March/April 2022) and Malta (October 2022) and closing remarks

Tagungsbericht *Island Exchanges. First Meeting of the DFG Island Studies Network*. 11.11.2011–12.11.2021, digital (Tübingen), in: H-Soz-Kult 07.02.2022.