“Le dur ne dure pas, seul dure le doux”

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Repenser les perceptions dominantes du « maritime » dans l’archéologie égéenne du début de l’âge du bronze

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Introduction

- 1 When does a sharper focus on the dynamics of islands and the sea begin to emerge in Aegean archaeology? The *terminus post quem* is set at the end of the 19th century, with the outset of archaeological explorations on the prehistoric southern Aegean island communities, inhabiting “an archipelago that we know as the Cyclades”.¹ More specifically, the early Cyclades became a coherent field of archaeological research between the years 1894 and 1899, when Christos Tsountas, widely known as “the father of Greek prehistory”, conducted extensive excavations on several Cycladic islands.² Largely attuned to the dominant theoretical debates of his time (i.e. evolutionism vs diffusionism, theories of cultural change vs theories of cultural continuity³), Tsountas was the first to launch the term “Cycladic civilisation”, implying an understanding of “insularity” as a condition which prompted islanders into a culturally distinct way of life without dismissing altogether contact with other cultures. However, he seems to have paid less attention to the dynamics of interconnections and maritime life and more to the empirical substantiation of the indigenous characteristics of the “Cycladic civilisation”.⁴ In a way, therefore, Tsountas prioritized the concept of “culture” over the concept of the “sea”, with the ultimate objective being to argue forcefully for an evolutionist understanding of Aegean Prehistory.
- 2 For many decades after Tsountas, the islands of the Aegean remained on the sidelines of archaeological research for “any synthesis of the field had perforce to base its conclusions almost exclusively upon data collected before the turn of the century”.⁵ It is only in the late 1950s that the publication *L’art des Cyclades* by Christian Zervos⁶

brought the early Cyclades to the spotlight and was described as “one of the most ambitious photographic encyclopaedias of Greek Art ever attempted”.⁷ In 1964, John L. Caskey, in his contribution to the *Cambridge Ancient History*, acknowledged that “in the twentieth century excavation in the Cyclades has not been extensive” with most evidence deriving still “from the fruitful researches of Chr. Tsountas”.⁸ The “sea” and the “islands” remained essentialist and thus ahistorical in perspective:

There are scores of islands in the archipelago, almost all having bays and harbours that offer shelter to small craft. The land is steep and rocky, poor in water, soil and vegetation. Agriculture was never very rewarding; fishing and trading were always the natural pursuits of men. Stylized representations of ships and waves and fishes appear in the decoration of their early pottery. It is not clear just how the ships were built, but we may suppose their oars and sails moved them easily from one harbour to another in fair weather, over the length and breadth of the Aegean and occasionally well beyond its limits.⁹

- 3 At the turn of the 1960s, a new phase of fieldwork began in the Southern Aegean archipelago (fig. 1), predominantly in Kea¹⁰, Keros¹¹, Naxos¹² and Saliagos¹³. Around the same time, Colin Renfrew¹⁴ and Christos Doumas¹⁵ sought to produce a new analytical framework for the early Cyclades, by attempting a methodical re-assessment of the extant empirical record, its analytical reliability as well as interpretive potential. During the early 1970s and in the wake of New Archaeology, Colin Renfrew launched his ground-breaking work *The Emergence of Civilisation: The Cyclades and the Aegean in the Third Millennium BC* (1972). This book constituted the first serious attempt to reweigh the importance of maritime contact and the sea for Early Bronze Age Cycladic communities, and it did so by placing emphasis on the “multidimensional” character of the term “ecosystem”¹⁶ as well as the inextricable connection established between subsistence, technology and trade in “meagre lands” (i.e. the pressing need for diversity in subsistence products and raw materials, improved seafaring technology, “directional trade”, “wealth”¹⁷).

Fig. 1: Map of the southern Aegean with sites and places mentioned in the text.

Map based on d-maps.com and modified by the authors.

- 4 The *Emergence* may be considered an intellectual turning point for Aegean archaeology and especially the archaeology of the southern Aegean archipelago, predominantly because it sheds light onto the interplay between culture and physical environment, thus providing a comprehensive approach to social organization and change.¹⁸ Since then and despite disagreements about chronology and dating,¹⁹ Renfrew's theories have laid the foundations for more intensified archaeological fieldwork in the area, as evidenced by the publication of four reviews on the archaeology of the early southern Aegean over the past thirty years.²⁰
- 5 From the late 1980s onwards, perhaps the most significant contribution to our understanding of island archaeology with particular reference to the early Cyclades, comes from the work of Cyprian Broodbank. His book, *An Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades*, as well as the articles preceding its publication,²¹ embraced a new perspective and challenged assumptions that had long dominated archaeological discourse.²² One such common assumption was that material culture reflects island life as opposed to playing a more active role in its very constitution.²³ By extension, there was also adherence to the idea that the examination of material culture in maritime regions gives insights into possible "movements of things and people"; however, this perspective gave no analytical attention to how definitions of *both* "centrality" and "marginality" are constructed and negotiated in insular environments:

Islands, and especially island clusters, with their complex symbiosis of land and sea, are commonly places that amplify and polarize isolation and interaction... where the encircling sea may define the threshold of the distant and the 'other' closer even than the physical horizon, or alternatively create a highway outwards to a wider and more cosmopolitan world.²⁴

- 6 In order to move towards a novel island archaeological perspective, Broodbank required, first of all, the serious challenging of the belief that individual islands are “ideal units for analysing island societies”. Taking the early Cyclades as his main case study, he professed that a coherent intellectual framework for the archaeology of the southern Aegean archipelago ought to draw attention to the substantial degree of variability and “alternative ways of inhabiting the islands”:²⁵

In island archaeology, the identification of the island as the primary unit is simply an imposed view: the most obvious unit that we can pick out. But ‘the island’ is just one point on a spectrum of potentially relevant framework ranging from a patch of coast to entire island groups, and beyond.²⁶

The Early Cyclades were thoroughly dependent on each other for survival, and neither island boundedness nor external dependency is really helpful as a model for understanding their dynamics.²⁷

- 7 In fact, Broodbank’s main concern was not only to unveil diversity in cultural perceptions of travel and isolation but also to give empirical support to the inextricable connection between maritime ideology, strategies of social differentiation and the manipulation of value. More specifically, he argued that, within the wider spectrum of microworlds of the (seemingly homogeneous) Cycladic archipelago, intra- and inter-island communications would have been controlled by a very small number of island communities, whereas other social groups and/or parts of the Cyclades would have used the sea only infrequently.²⁸ The very infrequency of maritime activity by the latter would contribute to the further increase of their dependency, when things and resources not readily available were eventually required. Under this scheme, the sources of power and inequality laid primarily in the very activity and practice of maritime movement itself.²⁹
- 8 In 2011, all contributions to the edited volume *The Seascape in Aegean Prehistory*³⁰ called for a more flexible approach to islands and the sea and a new angle of vision in the study of the Aegean, especially its southern part, Cyprus and the east Mediterranean: this approach sought to theoretically and empirically substantiate the constant reworking of the “maritime” and the “insular”, while also stressing that, as in the case of the term “landscape”,³¹ the use of the term “seascape”³² could allow the incorporation and fertile combination of the “natural” and the “symbolic”, from insularity and maritime culture to human geography, phenomenology and conceptual mapping.³³ Drawing upon the concept of “maritime cultural landscape”,³⁴ the editor’s intention was to allow room for a comprehensive appreciation of the relationship between people and the sea. With regard to the early history of the southern Aegean communities, Catapoti³⁵ investigated how materials and things come out of circulation to become active components of corporeal performances taking place in Early Cycladic funerary *loci*. Vavouranakis,³⁶ on the other hand, reviewed mortuary practices in Early Bronze Age Crete in relation to their (physical and symbolic) orientation towards the sea and concluded that, by the end of the third millennium, mortuary practices had redirected their focus onto land rather than sea.

Critique: (Is)land-Based Approaches to the Sea

- 9 Discussion so far has sought to demonstrate the extent to which the subject areas of islands and the sea in the prehistoric Aegean have developed and expanded from the early writings of Christos Tsountas into more holistic forms of understanding,

currently working at the intersection between the “physical” and the “metaphorical”.³⁷ In view of considerable theoretical developments, the seemingly uncontentious understanding of the relationship between maritime life and (material) culture as portrayed by Tsountas has been shown to acquire a different dimension in Renfrew’s work, where we witness the first serious attempt to approach both (material) culture and physical environment as indispensable components of a unified framework of analysis.

- 10 Largely attuned to the principles of the processual school of thought, Renfrew’s work dominated archaeological discourse for several decades and played a key role in the definition of analytical priorities as far as the southern Aegean archipelago was concerned. The highly deterministic nature of New Archaeology, however, channelled the interpretive efforts of the *Emergence* to some categories at the expense of others: more specifically, the focus on the concept of the *ecosystem* and on substantiating its relevance to different stages in the evolutionary process (on the degree, in other words, of social complexity). Once again, this relied upon unwarranted assumptions with the most crucial being the universal (thus essentialist) properties of islands and the sea but also the way these become manifested in the archaeological record.
- 11 Broodbank’s work brought to the fore a troubling variability in terms of the range and spatial distribution of sites, activities and materials in the southern Aegean and argued that this complexity undermines any attempt at generalization. In an elaborate and highly eloquent manner, the opening chapters of *Island Archaeology* raise a wide spectrum of theoretical issues as regards long standing definitions of islands and the sea. It has to be acknowledged, however, that, at the level of interpretation of the particular context that is the early Cyclades, the Proximate Point Analysis model that he proposes remains a deterministic framework of interpretation for it portrays *geographical location* as the main factor determining the degree of complexity and societal differentiation in the area.
- 12 Perhaps a common denominator of all the aforementioned approaches is the (implicit or explicit) adherence to the idea that the *island* constitutes the basic unit of analysis through which we can begin our investigation of maritime lifeways in the prehistoric Aegean. In the work of Tsountas and most emphatically Renfrew, the Cyclades, as a cluster of islands, exhibit the same characteristics and properties that an individual island does, thus guaranteeing the universality, clarity and by extension effectiveness of the latter as an analytical category. Broodbank, on the other hand, did indeed put the term *island* under severe scrutiny, bringing to the fore how definitions and discursive knowledge (“what is an island?”) are carried forward as practical orientations and task-oriented techniques. At the end of the day, however, the variability in the level of organization of different islands within the Cycladic cluster provided further confirmation of the thesis he sought to do away with in the first place, namely that there is nothing analytically traceable beyond the island unit.
- 13 This is precisely the gap that the *Seascape* volume sought to fill in the first place: the volume allowed a deeper appreciation of previously unexplored analytical parameters as far as engagement with the “maritime” is concerned (such as perception, experience, embodiment, social negotiation) and usefully took its cue from the idea that we need to view this engagement as the result of explicit, historically specific strategies. Despite its call for a greater emphasis on multi-scalar analysis and empirical detail, and while it attempted to place the sea at the centre of attention, the preferred

topos of research, the popular adopted *point of view* of the seascape appears to be—once again—(is)land-based.³⁸

- 14 Admittedly, this bias is partly due to the nature of the extant archaeological record, which is mostly the result of land rather than underwater investigations. However, archaeological enquiry in maritime environments ought to be able to work effectively with the invisible: fragments, minor traces and even the total absence of things, people, relations and conditions that were once present in water.³⁹ The southern Aegean archipelago, at the level of both geomorphology and cognition—as Broodbank⁴⁰ has rightly pointed out—offers valuable examples of how the complex interplay between *presence* and *absence* operated in the area. It is however the very vision of *island archaeology* that hampers the understanding of the dynamics and richness of maritime life.⁴¹ Taking as our point of departure that the *Seascape* volume sought to address this issue but did so only in part, the main aim of this paper will be to provide a comprehensive theoretical toolkit for reinforcing the role of the sea component in our interpretations of Aegean Prehistory.

Towards a New Conceptual Vocabulary for the Early Bronze Age Aegean Maritime Archaeology

- 15 Over the past few decades, Aegean archaeology has increasingly adopted a more nuanced approach to the concept of society. “Community”, “groupness” and the “social” have been awarded a fluid, flexible and fuzzy character, with their borders being under constant negotiation and reworking. As a result, humanities research and archaeology in particular have moved beyond the analytical quest of identifying rigid geographical and socio-political units. They have renewed their approaches to the movement of people, materials, objects, images and ideas. One of the most significant developments of recent years has been the marked increase of evidence regarding early Prehistory in the Aegean Sea, which has now pushed human presence in the region spanning from Lemnos to Crete as far back as the Palaeolithic.⁴² This demonstrates that maritime mobility was not a kind of last resort for communities whose interest (in terms of subsistence, settlement and transport) would normally (if not exclusively) be directed towards the mainland. Rather, seafaring in the Aegean archipelago appears to have been a constant of life,⁴³ far earlier in time than previously anticipated.
- 16 Placing mobility at the centre of analytical enquiry has also challenged the long-lasting distinctions between exogenous and indigenous understandings of “maritime culture”. Highly indicative in this respect is how archaeological discourse has dealt with the seemingly idiosyncratic character of several Early Bronze Age funerary assemblages located in the southern Greek mainland, Crete and Asia Minor (as for instance, Aghios Kosmas⁴⁴ and Tsepi⁴⁵ in Attica, Manika⁴⁶ in Euboea, Hagia Photia⁴⁷ and Gournes⁴⁸ in Crete, Liman Tepe in Asia Minor). In all the aforementioned cases, a major dispute within the confines of the discipline has long been whether to interpret finds with strong stylistic associations with Early Cycladic material as a product of colonization or exchange/trade.⁴⁹
- 17 Both interpretative models accept the existence of “unified” cultures and pigeonhole artefacts according to their findspots as “local” or “exotic”. Thus, a marble figurine found at a cemetery in the Cyclades would have been viewed as an item of local

production, but if identified at a site in Attica or Crete would be classified as an “import”. In a slightly different manner (but in obvious dialogue with the exchange/trade hypothesis), recent attempts to emphasize “local” production and/or consumption patterns also imply a definition of a “unit” based on geographical criteria. For instance, obsidian blades and the Koumasa-type marble figurines from Early Minoan funerary assemblages have been seen as local “reworkings” of their “Cycladic” counterparts.⁵⁰ The very notion of “reworking” implies of a “prototype” and hence an authentic source or place of origin.

- 18 At the end of the day, however, what we encounter in the extant archaeological record is a far more complex picture. Several studies have recently attempted to tame this complexity by bringing to the fore the concept of “hybridity”⁵¹. One could argue of course that this concept brings back into discussion observations initially made by Tsountas, Vermeule and Renfrew. Vermeule, for example, referred to the differences between the burial assemblages of two Cycladic islands in the following manner: “Syros... with its dolichocephalic skulls, fondness of frying pans and spiral ornaments, and indifference to covered toilet boxes, presents another aspect from Amorgos, with its incised wares, huge idols, and interest in copper weapons”.⁵² The bewildering variety of the Cycladic repertoire has been taken one step further by Colin Renfrew, who understood “cultures” that went beyond the boundaries of a single island. He thus came up with a diachronic framework of sociocultural development, which included the *Saliagos-Kephala culture*; the *Grotta-Pelos culture* mostly stretching across the central and southern Cyclades (i.e. Pelos and the Phylakopi pre-city levels in Melos, Grotta in Naxos, Paroikia in Paros, Siphnos and Amorgos); the *Keros-Syros culture* spreading in the north and central Cyclades (i.e. Chalandriani in Syros, Dhaskalio in Keros, Kythnos in Delos, Naxos, Ios, and Thera); the “Mischkultur” of the coastal mainland (Euboea, Attica and Kea); and the *Phylakopi I culture* located mostly in the southern Cyclades (Phylakopi in Melos, Paroikia in Paros, Siphnos, Naxos, Amorgos and Thera).⁵³ Although Renfrew labelled all the foregoing cultures by maintaining as components of his definition specific islands and/or cemeteries,⁵⁴ his approach did help us appreciate nevertheless that the “mixtures” attested to by the evidence are not necessarily an obstacle to be overcome but instead an inherent ambiguity of the material which we should somehow embrace.
- 19 This ambiguity of the record does not simply entail a greater degree of sensitivity towards the complexity of maritime life in the past. It also necessitates the casting of a critical eye to the very question of how we have built our analytical categories so far. And if we accept that the latter have been problematic indeed, what sort of classifications would we be in a position to propose instead, so as to capture the “mobile”, the “relational”, the “hybrid”, without rendering them into yet another set of static categories?
- 20 An admittedly underexplored analytical category in the archaeology of the Early Cyclades has been the longboat (fig. 2), whereupon rests our current understanding of maritime activity in the Aegean archipelago during the third millennium BC. It should be noted that longboats were not the only vessels sailing the Aegean and that maritime activity was about both regional-scale journeys and local trips. Furthermore, Jarriel’s GIS modelling of the geomorphological conditions and of the sea and wind currents has suggested that the Aegean was a highly variable place as regards its seafaring affordances.⁵⁵ Constantakopoulou⁵⁶ has noted the contribution of both long-range

travel and cabotage and short-distance ferrying to the connectivity that characterised the Cyclades in antiquity. Renfrew⁵⁷ has developed a similar argument to explain the emergence of Keros as the first regional ritual centre in the Early Bronze Age Aegean. He notes, on the one hand, connections with southern mainland Greece and Anatolia, and, on the other hand, the neighbouring islands of Naxos and Amorgos, wherefrom large quantities of building stone and pottery were imported respectively. Such bulk imports could not be served by long and slender vessels.

Fig. 2: Tentative reconstruction sketch of a longboat.

Drawing by Giorgos Vavouranakis.

- 21 Nonetheless, there has been no serious challenge regarding the significance of the longboat, which, as already mentioned, has been highlighted by Broodbank as the parameter that made the difference and distinguished the more from less connected island communities in the Aegean during the Early Bronze Age. For all the above reasons, the longboat will be further examined here only as an indicative rather than the sole or most important example of sea vessel. One problem that immediately arises is the lack of related empirical evidence, since the longboat is mainly known through depictions and images, such as those on Early Cycladic frying-pans, the petroglyphs at Vathy in Astypalaia,⁵⁸ or a few clay, stone and lead models from the Cyclades and Crete.⁵⁹ Part of a vessel similar to the longboat, albeit of a different type and Middle Bronze Age date, has been excavated at the site of Mitrou, an islet off the east coast of south-central mainland Greece.⁶⁰ Despite the meagre evidence, it is generally accepted that longboats were either dug out or planked, or built with a combination of these two techniques, with a length of about 15-30 m. They had a relatively flat hull, low bow and high stern. They had to be paddled when they did not follow the sea currents.⁶¹
- 22 It is not hard to imagine the longboat as an entity of hybrid construction. Like any boat, it was built on land with the purpose of sailing in the sea. Its construction required different skills and raw materials; in other words, a wide array of resources both material and immaterial. It may have brought many people together in order to be made, but it was also supposed to take people away on long-range maritime trips.⁶² An image of both unity and disunity, neither solid nor liquid, partly mobile but also static, both connected with and disconnected from the land, the longboat (as in fact any boat) is the type of category that brings us closer to what we would describe as the “complex”, “dynamic” and “fluid”. In fact, the longboat may be considered the ultimate hybrid object for the archaeology of the southern Aegean. It challenges any

pigeonholing of material culture into static categories and calls, instead, for a meticulous mapping of connections between places, people and things.

23 The longboat also constitutes an analytical category that can capture effectively the diverse behaviours and interactions established within a maritime environment. How Early Bronze Age seafaring in the Aegean has been approached by Broodbank in *Island Archaeology* will be employed here as a starting point for illustrating our argument: Broodbank’s estimates on population size and the availability of subsistence resources for the period/area in question led him to the hypothesis that only a few island communities would be able to sponsor the building and travel of a longboat. Meanwhile, he dismissed the possibility of inter-communal projects for he considered their management an impractical or over-demanding enterprise.⁶³

24 However, the possibility of co-operative ventures should not be so easily eschewed. Gosden and Pavlides⁶⁴ have demonstrated how the Lapita in the Pacific were a sea-based community spread on different islands. In his discussion of insularity and connectivity, Knapp⁶⁵ mentions that “the degree of openness or boundedness on any island certainly fluctuated through time”. Pauwelussen⁶⁶ has recently provided ethnographic examples from southern Indonesia, where the notions of community and belonging rest upon the very performance of seafaring and the creation of a maritime network which connects southern Indonesia communities with people from as far as Cambodia and the Philippines. Drawing upon Pauwelussen’s work, it would be a worthwhile analytical pursuit to approach the longboat as a “gigantic knot” unifying heterogeneous groups, originating from different communities around the Aegean archipelago:

Revoyez le vaisseau qui appareille : il ne largue, par les aussières, qu’une infime partie du lacis, du réseau, du complexe entrelacs des liens qui le tiennent et qui n’ont de nom que dans la langue des marins. Délié ? Non pas : lié serré. Ne quittons-nous quelque contrat que pour en contracter d’autres ? Qu’était-ce qu’un vaisseau à voiles sinon un gigantesque nœud exquisément compliqué ?⁶⁷

25 Long-distance voyages meant that the longboat crew (of 25 individuals or more⁶⁸) was cut off from home for long periods of time. Constantly “in shipwreck alert”, “always in dire straits”,⁶⁹ they had to survive through alliance on boat but also by forging relations at their ports of call. Their survival was not restricted to subsistence; it also required maintenance of the vessel itself and possible renewal of the crew, for example due to death and/or illness. To assume that these ties were uncontested and peaceful would be misplaced. Indeed, the petroglyphs on the island of Astypalaia, featuring combinations of boats and daggers,⁷⁰ imply that conflict and seafaring in the Early Bronze Age were more than common:

Appareiller signifie que le bateau et ses marins font confiance à leurs techniques et à leur contrat social. Car ils quittent le port tous armés, de pied en cap, vergues fières et bout-dehors pointé vers l’avenir. On dirait qu’en s’emparant de l’eau, ils prennent la mer dans leurs appareils : le vaisseau hante ses filins et ses baleinières, entouré de sa proue et son gouvernail, protégé dans la cage de ses cordes nouées, le pilote habite le bateau. Or tout ce beau monde, si bien préparé qu’il annonça au départ que tout était paré, appareille une seconde fois quand la tempête arrache câbles et cabestans et déshabille l’esquif en déchirant le tissu de ses cordages : désormais désarmé.⁷¹

“Le dur ne dure pas”⁷²

- 26 Our discussion so far has had a twofold purpose: it began with an overview of the archaeological literature on the role and significance of maritime activity in the Early Bronze Age Aegean and argued that it is crucial to break away from (is)land-based approaches to seafaring, which have long upheld the binary opposition of land vs. sea but also prompted the analytical pigeonholing of the extant archaeological record into static and bounded analytical categories.

Indeed, one may observe that the spatial bias (and land-bias) in thinking community is persistent. Perhaps so much so, that it has become ubiquitous, making even critical social scientists sometimes unreflective of why a sense of belonging together... should be place-based. Despite the mobility and translocality inherent in most sea-based livelihoods, it is often implicitly assumed that maritime communities are confined to terrestrial places, that they are of a local scale...⁷³

- 27 The present paper proceeded with the establishment of a new theoretical vocabulary, which placed emphasis on a new conceptual triad: *mobility*, *hybridity* and *relationality*. In the heart of this intellectual enterprise lay the need to stress Serres' point that any epistemological attempt to solidify the dynamics of maritime lifeways is doomed to failure. Thus, when we approach such a versatile environment as the Early Bronze Age Aegean archipelago, we need to constantly remind ourselves that these are places creating “order through fluctuation”, a difference that Serres called “exodic” and thus not detectable through analytical enframing:

Jamais vous n'en trouverez sur les parcours de la méthode, elles gisent hors des équilibres globaux de l'épistémê. La méthode minimise les contraintes, les annule ; l'exode se plonge dans leur désordre.⁷⁴

- 28 To further illustrate our point, we wish to draw upon Serres' discussion on the notions of “hard” and “soft”⁷⁵ and more specifically on his definition of the “quasi-object”,⁷⁶ which may be summarized as that which is always flexible, ever-transforming and thus enduring. Continuing along this line of thought, Serres professes, we may revisit the “classical tradition of knowledge” (with its emphasis on rigid classifications) only to abandon altogether and shift attention instead to the malleable, the elusive, the everchanging.

- 29 The longboat, in the way that it has been discussed in earlier sections, may become an illustrative example of a quasi-object for Early Bronze Age Aegean archaeology. It has been mainly portrayed as a determining factor of social organization in the existing literature, yet we have focused instead on its hybrid properties and how those could possibly alter dominant interpretations of the “maritime” during the period in question. We have thus argued in favour of a more fragile (if not protean) political geography for the Aegean Sea, which is less dependent on static, (is)land-based institutions and more on the aleatory properties of the boat-as-quasi-object:

Il y a des objets pour le faire, de quasi-objets, quasi-sujets, dont on ne sait s'ils sont des êtres ou des relations, des lambeaux d'êtres ou des bouts de relations... C'est très exactement l'abandon de mon individu ou de mon être dans un quasi-objet qui n'est là que pour circuler. C'est rigoureusement la transsubstantiation de l'être en relation. L'être est aboli pour la relation.⁷⁷

- 30 This invitation for a critical reconsideration of analytical categories revolving around the concept of the “maritime” in Early Bronze Aegean archaeology along with the suggestion to focus on the investigation of hybrid units of analysis, such as the

longboat, could be—quite reasonably—perceived by many as a futile archaeological task. It is impossible to analyse negative evidence, namely entities that are not only invisible to the archaeological eye, but also, to an extent, for the inhabitants of Early Bronze Age communities, since these entities appeared at times as a “sudden event” and others as the result of anticipations: sometimes as “threat”, sometimes as relief. Put simply, and despite the fact that they constitute elusive and fluid entities, longboats had an effect of varying scale and intensity in the workings of the southern Aegean region during the third millennium BC.

- 31 We could parallel longboats and maritime conduct with the *interstitium*,⁷⁸ an organ recently professed to have been discovered in the human body: it has been reported that layers long thought to be dense, connective tissue are now taken to form a series of fluid-filled compartments beneath the skin, as well as lining vital organs (gut, lungs), blood vessels and muscles. All the above join together as a complex network supported by a trellis of flexible proteins, so as to act as “shock absorbers” and protect body tissues from damage. What is striking is that conventional medical analytical methods had so far missed the *interstitium*, mainly because they involved the draining away of fluid—therefore destroying the organ’s structure. It is precisely for this reason that these body-wide, fluid-filled shock absorbers had been considered a simple layer of connective tissue.
- 32 Regardless of how reliable the foregoing discovery is, we may nevertheless claim that a discovery (any discovery for that matter) relates to particular ways of positioning ourselves against the world; in this case, particular ways of *seeing* and *talking about* the human body. Similarly, our examination of maritime lifeways in the Early Bronze Age Aegean concluded with a discussion of the boat. Its fresh conceptualization as a means towards a new methodological framework stressed the need for relational and fluid analytical categories. In a similar manner to traditional medical analysis, that prioritized the solid at the expense of the liquid, we sought to unveil the land-based bias of established archaeological interpretations and to advocate that a coherent account of the “maritime” moves beyond binary oppositions in order to grasp (both epistemologically as well as ontologically) the inherent dynamics of “hybridity”.⁷⁹

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NOTES

1. Broodbank 2000a, p. 1.
2. Tsountas 1894, 1898 and 1899; Doulas 2002, p. 15; Marthari 2002; Vasilikou 2006; Voutsaki 2017; Berg 2019, p. 17.
3. Doulas 2002; Voutsaki 2017.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Davis 1992, p. 699. These data also included the results of the excavation of the Bronze Age settlement at Phylakopi in Melos (Atkinson *et al.* 1904).
6. Zervos 1957.
7. Weinberg 1960, p. 299.
8. Caskey 1964, p. 25.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Caskey 1971 and 1972.
11. Zapheirpoulou 1967 and 1975.
12. Doulas 1965.
13. Evans and Renfrew 1968.
14. Renfrew 1965, 1967 and 1969.
15. Doulas 1972.
16. Renfrew 1972, p. 451-455.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 493-494.

18. Interestingly, only a year after *The Emergence of Civilisation*, another very significant publication came out, authored by J. Evans, under the title “Islands as Laboratories for the Study of Cultural Process” (1973). Evans’ work is very much in line with the *problématique* developed by Renfrew in his study of the Aegean Sea. In fact, according to Broodbank (2000a, p. 6), the 1970s mark the birth of island archaeology as “a defined field” (Sahlins 1955; Goodenough 1957; Mead 1957; Vayda and Rappaport 1963; Evans 1977; Clarke and Terrell 1978). These early discussions placed emphasis on the importance of islands for archaeology and described them as “natural experiments” or “cultural laboratories”, “where we could study cultural change, in supposedly controlled, isolated environments” (DiNapoli and Leppard 2018, p. 157).

19. Barber 1987; Barber and MacGillivray 1980; papers in MacGillivray and Barber 1984.

20. Barber 1987; Davis 1992; Rambach 2000. For the latest synthesis and update see Berg 2019.

21. Broodbank 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000a and 2000b. Recently, Broodbank (2013) expanded his work geographically, to include the Mediterranean Sea in its entirety, from prehistoric to classical times.

22. Broodbank (2000a, p. 65-67) rightly acknowledges that the first awareness of the interpretive potential of island archaeology for Cycladic prehistory was demonstrated in the works of John Cherry and Jack Davis (Cherry 1981, 1985, 1987 and 1990; Davis 1982 and 1984; Davis and Cherry 1979, 1990; Cherry *et al.* 1991).

23. Broodbank 2000a, p. 1.

24. Broodbank 1993, p. 316.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

26. Broodbank 2000a, p. 22.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

28. Broodbank 1993 and 2000a.

29. Broodbank 1993, p. 323.

30. Vavouranakis 2011a.

31. Indicatively see David and Thomas 2008.

32. Gosden and Pavlides 1994.

33. Indicatively see Cooney 2003 and the other papers in the same *World Archaeology* thematic volume; also Westerdahl 1992; Patton 1996; Llobera 2005; Rainbird 2007.

34. Westerdahl 1992 and 2011. Latest update Westerdahl 2017.

35. Catapoti 2011.

36. Vavouranakis 2011b.

37. Martin 2011, p. 1085.

38. Detailed review by Bennet 2012.

39. Agouridis 1997; Jarriel 2018.

40. Broodbank 2000a, p. 17 and 21-25.

41. Berg 2010.

42. Recent review of the evidence and references in Berg 2019, p. 63-84.

43. However, it should be kept in mind that the paucity of habitational evidence regarding the Early and Middle Neolithic may be pointing either to an occupation

hiatus or a less permanent mode of habitation for approx. two millennia (ca. 7000-5000 BC). Carter *et al.* 2016, p. 285; Berg 2019, p. 88-90.

44. Mylonas 1959.

45. Pantelidou-Gofa 2005.

46. Sampson 1988.

47. Davaras and Betancourt 2004, 2012.

48. Galanaki 2006.

49. Indicatively cf. Mylonas 1959, p. 149; Barber 1987, p. 134-137; Sampson 1988, p. 117; Day *et al.* 1998; Pantelidou-Gofa 2005, p. 343; Weiberg 2007, p. 197 ; Karantzali 2008.

50. For the obsidian see Carter 1997; 2004, p. 298. For the latest treatment of the Koumasa type and other Cycladic-style figurines on Crete see Renfrew 2017 and other papers in the same volume.

51. For hybridity in archaeology see indicatively Voskos and Knapp 2008 and Stockhammer 2011.

52. Vermeule 1964, p. 47-48.

53. Renfrew 1972, p. 135-185.

54. For the criticism he received for this approach see footnote 22 above.

55. Jarriel 2018.

56. Constantaskopoulou 2007.

57. Renfrew 2019, p. 551-553.

58. Vlachopoulos and Matthaïou 2010-2013, p. 376-378.

59. For a comprehensive treatment of prehistoric boat iconography see Wedde 2000. For an update with critique see Van de Moortel 2017.

60. Van de Moortel 2012.

61. Broodbank 2000a, p. 97-99; Van de Moortel's (2017, p. 263-265) type A1.

62. For an anthropological case-study of the social dimension of ship building see Maragoudaki 2019.

63. Broodbank 2000a, p. 256-258.

64. Gosden and Pavlides 1994.

65. Knapp 2008, p. 23.

66. Pauwelussen 2016.

67. Serres 1992, p. 162.

68. Broodbank 1989, p. 329.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

70. Vlachopoulos and Matthaïou 2010-2013, p. 376-378.

71. Serres 1992, p. 189.

72. Serres 2008, p. 115.

73. Pauwelussen 2016, p. 7.

74. Serres 1985, p. 287.

75. *Ibid.*

76. Serres 1980, p. 301-314.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

78. Benias *et al.* 2018.

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ABSTRACTS

This paper offers a detailed overview of past approaches to the world of maritime interaction in the southern Aegean during the third millennium BC, including Tsountas’ pioneering launch of the term “island cultures of the Cyclades”, Renfrew’s thought-provoking “Emergence of Civilisation” in the southern Aegean, and Broodbank’s insightful analysis of “insularity” and long-distance seafaring. Taking as its point of departure recent phenomenological approaches emphasizing a range of factors, from the notion of the seascape to bodily performances related to the sea, the central argument put forward is the need for a more integrated approach to the “maritime”, which departs from island-centred perceptions of the sea and seafaring and stresses the analytical value of concepts such as mobility, hybridity and relationality, through reference to the Early Bronze Age longboat.

Cet article propose une vue d’ensemble des approches précédentes du monde de l’interaction maritime dans le sud de la mer Égée au cours du troisième millénaire avant J.-C., ce qui englobe le lancement pionnier du terme « cultures insulaires des Cyclades » par Tsountas, la réflexion stimulante de Renfrew sur « l’émergence de la civilisation » dans le sud de la mer Égée ou l’analyse perspicace de Broodbank sur « l’insularité » et la navigation maritime à longue distance. Prenant pour point de départ des approches phénoménologiques récentes qui mettent l’accent sur une variété de facteurs, depuis la notion de paysage marin jusqu’aux performances corporelles liées à la mer, l’argument central avancé ici est la nécessité d’une approche plus intégrée du « maritime », qui s’écarte des perceptions insulaires de la mer et de la navigation pour mieux souligner la valeur analytique de concepts tels que la mobilité, l’hybridité et la relationnalité, le tout en se référant au motif de la chaloupe du début de l’âge du bronze.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Cyclades, paysage marin, hybridité, mobilité, relationnalité, chaloupe

Keywords: Cyclades, seascape, hybridity, mobility, relationality, longboat

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