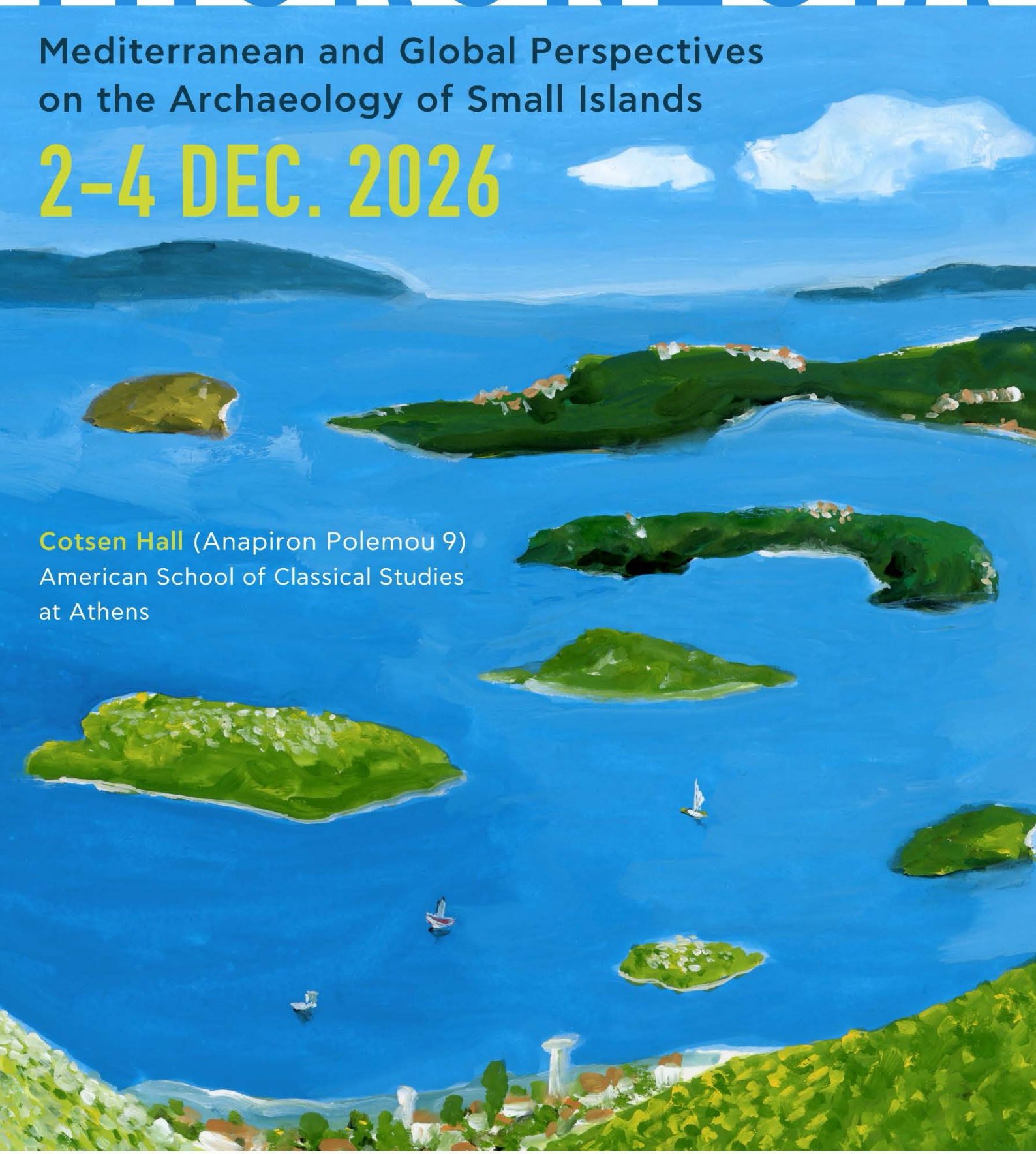
MICRONESIA

Mediterranean and Global Perspectives on the Archaeology of Small Islands

2–4 DEC. 2026



Cotsen Hall (Anapiron Polemou 9)
American School of Classical Studies
at Athens

Organized by

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Conference Schedule

Wednesday, 2 December 2026

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Session 1: Why Small Islands?
7:00 pm	Reception

Thursday, 3 December 2026

9:00 am – 11:00 am	Session 2: Ecology and Biogeography
11:00 am – 11:30 am	Coffee Break
11:30 am – 1:00 pm	Session 3: Reaching Small Islands in Early Prehistory
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Session 3: Reaching Small Islands in Early Prehistory (continued)
3:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Session 4: Comparative Case Studies in Small-Island Systems (with Coffee Break at 4:00 pm)

Friday, 4 December 2026

9:30 am – 1:00 pm	Session 5: Settlement, Society, and the Human Experience (with Coffee Break at 11:00 am)
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Session 6: Patterns and Idiosyncrasies of Life on Small Islands (with Coffee Break at 4:00 pm)
5:30 pm – 6:30 pm	Session 7: Big Questions and Next Directions –Breakout Groups and General Discussion

Sessions and Papers

Wednesday, 2 December 2026

SESSION 1: Why Small Islands?

5:00pm-5:30pm **Why Small Islands?**
Alex R. Knodell and Nena Galanidou

5:30pm-6:00pm **Small Islands in Archipelagic Systems**
Dylan Gaffney

6:00pm-6:30pm **Microlandscapes and Networked Microislands: Readable Palimpsests of Matter and Concepts**
Andreas Kapetanios

6:30pm-7:00pm **The Beauty of the Marginal: Mediterranean Island Archaeology through the Mirror of the Contemporary**
Francesco Iacono

Reception

Thursday, 3 December 2026

SESSION 2: Ecology and Biogeography

9:00am-9:30am **Rock Islands: Scraps of Eden or Frankenstein's Monsters?**
Spyros Sfenthourakis

9:30am-10:00am ***Deportatio ad insulam*: The Costs of the Special Island**
Panayiotis Pafilis

10:00am-10:30am ***Natura artis magistra*: Two Biogeographical Stories with Bee and Hoverfly Pollinators from the Aegean**
Theodora Petanidou

10:30am-11:00am **The Ecology of Insularity in Dynamic Nearshore Landscapes**
Natalie D. Munro and Nicholas Andrés Gonzalez

11:00am-11:30am **Coffee Break**

SESSION 3: Reaching Small Islands in Early Prehistory

11:30am-12:00pm **Small Islands: The Peaks of a Sunken Prehistoric Landscape**
Peny Tsakanikou and Dimitris Sakellariou

12:00pm-12:30pm **Small Islands, Big Steps: How to Reach the Opposite Shore in the Pleistocene**
Christina Papoulia

12:30pm-1:00pm **Imprints of boats in Archaeological Remains from Small Islands**
Hein B. Bjerck

1:00pm-2:00pm **Lunch Break**

2:00pm-2:30pm **Mesolithic Seafaring in the South-Central Mediterranean**
Eleanor Scerri, Nicholas C. Vella, and Mario Mata-González

2:30pm-3:00pm **Small Islands, Big Islands, and Seafaring by *H. sapiens* in the Mediterranean**
John F. Cherry

SESSION 4: Comparative Case Studies in Small- Island Systems

3:00pm-3:30pm **The Inner Ionian Archipelago Survey: A Hybrid Small Island Archaeology Project above and below Sea-Level**
Nena Galanidou, Maria Gatsi, Jeannette Forsen, Christos Chatzimpaloglou, Giorgos Iliopoulos, Andreas Kapetanios, Leonidas Koutsoumpos, Andreas Magganas, Cathy Morgan, Despina Nazou, Christina Papoulia, Dimitris Sakellariou, Vivian Staikou, Olga Tzortzakaki, Antonis Vasilakis, Myrto Veikou, Olympia Vikatou, and Panagiotis Zervoudakis

4:30pm-4:00pm **The Small Cycladic Islands Project: Miniature Landscapes and Regional Histories**
Alex R. Knodell and Demetrios Athanasoulis

4:00pm-4:30pm **Coffee Break**

4:30pm-5:00pm **No Island Is an Island: Community Viability in the Early Prehistoric Cyclades**
Michael J. Boyd, David Smith, Jill Hilditch, Marie Floquet, Tristan Carter, Kyra Bombardier, Hallvard Indgjerd, Rosie Campbell, Demetris Athanasoulis, and Evi Margaritis

5:00pm-5:30pm **Καὶ τὴ Ῥήνειαν ἑλὼν ἀνέθηκε τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ Δηλίῳ. An Island Dedicated to Delian Apollo: The Enduring Ties between Delos and Rheneia**
Zozi Papadopoulou and Vangelis Samaras

5:30pm-6:00pm **Stepping Stones within Sight of Land: Preliminary Results of the Little Islandscapes of the Saronic Project (LISP), 2024–2026**
Christopher Nuttall, Axel Frejman, Myrto Veikou, Aristeidis Varis, Giorgos Stergiou, Jovan Kovačević, Maria Rousou

6:00pm-6:30pm **The Historical Atlas of Greek Micronesia (HAGMi) Project: A Diachronic Approach of the Cultural Environment of the Greek Archipelago**
Georgios Koutzakiotis, Konstantinos Sarantidis, and Georgios Tataris

Friday, 4 December 2026

SESSION 5: Settlement, Society and the Human Experience

9:30am-10:00am **Cultural Resources and Decolonization: Case Studies from Mauritius and Chagos**
Krish Seetah

10:00am-10:30am **Do Small Islands Look Different? Predictability, Constraint, and Choice in a Model of EBA Aegean Settlement**
Rosie Campbell

10:30am-11:00am **Evidence for Seasonality in the Bronze Age Settlement on Chryssi off the Southeastern Coast of Crete**
Chrysa Sofianou, Thomas M. Brogan, Melissa S. Eaby, and Demetra Mylona

11:00am-11:30am **Coffee Break**

11:30am-12:00pm **Samothrace: A Big Small Island**
Bonna Wescoat and Dimitris Matsas

12:00pm-12:30am **Powerful Small Islands in Byzantine 'Seas of Agency'**
Myrto Veikou

12:30am-1:00pm **The Role of Small Islands in the Organization of the Cycladic Archipelago during the Early Middle Ages**
Demetrios Athanasoulis

1:00pm-2:00pm **Lunch Break**

SESSION 6: Patterns and Idiosyncrasies of Life on Small Islands

2:00pm-2:30pm **Genomic Insights into Social Structure in an Ancient Population of Oceania**
Lara R. Arauna, Michal Feldman, Selina Carlhoff, Kathrin Nägele, Adam Powell, Johannes Krause, Lawrence Kiko, Hallie R. Buckley, Rebecca L.Kinaston, and Cosimo Posth

2:30pm-3:00pm **Small Communities and Volcanic Hazards in the Lesser Antilles Archipelago**
Miriam A. W. Rothenberg, Jenni Barclay, and David M. Pyle

3:00pm-3:30pm **Micro-Insularity Theories as Modern Politics**
Eleftheria Zei

3:30pm-4:00pm **Small Islands and the Making of the Red Sea Region**
Roxani Margariti

4:00pm-4:30pm **Coffee Break**

4:30pm-5:00pm **Carceral Materialities and Memories of Exile on Mediterranean Islets**
Evan Levine

5:00pm-5:30pm **Rethinking Islandness in Greece: An Anthropological Approach to the Small Islands of the Aegean and Ionian Seas**
Despina Nazou

SESSION 7: Big Questions and Next Directions

5:30pm-6:30pm **Breakout Groups and General Discussion**

Reception

ABSTRACTS

SESSION 1: Why Small Islands?

Why Small Islands?

Alex R. Knodell and Nena Galanidou

Islands occupy a special place in the history of human societies and in contemporary cultural imaginations. In the ancient world, island life included sanctuaries, settlements, trade systems, and legendary points of reference. In the modern world, a rapid transformation has shifted what was once a mixed economy, encompassing fishing, livestock farming, horticulture, and agriculture into an economy dominated by services and tourism, a shift that is sweeping away bio- and social diversity. Island archaeology, now a well-established subfield, has brought significant advances to our understanding of human migration, evolution, and social complexity.

Our point of departure is the observation that small islands were regularly left out of the picture due to the unique challenges of both human occupation and conducting research on them. Nevertheless, small islands shed light on some of the least-known patterns and scales of human adaptability, endurance, and activity in marginal environments from prehistoric to modern times. Paraphrasing Thomas Hylland Eriksen's seminal 1995 book, *Small Places, Large Issues*, we suggest that small islands indeed hold the promise to clarify large issues by opening alternative windows into the grander constructs, ideas, and interpretations of prehistory and history. Yet, it would be misleading to treat small islands as a complementary source—as the "poor relatives" or smaller siblings of island archaeology. Rather, we see small islands as emblematic of island patterns writ large, while also exhibiting particular characteristics that might be defined as small-islandness, or *micronesia* (in Greek, μικρονησία), which we refer to in the title of this symposium (not to be confused with the Pacific Archipelago of Micronesia, though we expect the theories outlined her apply there as well).

Small islands in Archipelagic Systems

Dylan Gaffney

Small islands exist within archipelagic systems. Despite their small size, such islands are in fact crucial to the movement of people and materials throughout these wider systems. Several biogeographic and geological factors influence these dynamics, including remoteness and coastal complexity, as well as the availability of water, plant and animal life, arable soil, and raw materials. This presentation builds upon biogeographic and anthropological theory to identify four key points: (1) small islands are always in states of flux; (2) humans can engage with these long-term changes to small islands in a flexible manner; (3) humans create developmental systems by engaging with archipelagos, formed of differently sized islands, which facilitates learning and enskillment; (4) these developmental systems have evolved over time rhizomatically, through simultaneous processes of divergence and convergence. To explore these ideas, I draw on ethnographic and archaeological case studies from the Pacific Islands — including the archipelagos of Micronesia. The presentation shows that small Pacific islands have changed in their biogeographic and geological affordances throughout the Quaternary, that our species has been fairly quick to use and at least temporarily inhabit small islands during the Late Pleistocene and Holocene, that 'smallness' and marginality have been partially shaped by the nature of the developmental system in question, and that different kinds of small islands

have been integral to stimulating processes of divergence and connectivity. At a comparative level, it is clear that small islands were critically important for articulating and reticulating archipelagic systems in the human past — extending human capacities for overwater movements, diversifying subsistence regimes, facilitating secondary dispersals into already inhabited regions, and creating circulatory flows of people and objects.

Microlandscapes and Networked Microislands: Readable Palimpsests of Matter and Concepts

Andreas Kapetanios

This paper approaches micro-islands within the broader category of micro-landscapes: fields where observation, recording and interpretation comes into dense spatial entanglement with anthropogenic material formations, embodied practices, words, memories and documents. Their analytical value lies in that in such a framework, boundary conditions become unavoidably persistent, and thus observable. Shifting thresholds of access, subsistence, movement and perception, make the corresponding relations unusually historically legible, not only as regards the materialities of the landscapes but also as to their conceptual topologies.

A microisland is a microcosm within a network. Maritime routes, seasonal movements, kinship, exchange and shared practices act as umbilical cords linking it to neighbouring microislands, larger islands and mainlands. Habitation and use evolve through changing relations between spatial density and connectivity.

To investigate these relations, I propose a historicising ethnoarchaeology grounded in a semasiological approach to archaeological entities. Concepts such as “wall,” “terrace,” “boundary,” and “enclosure” are treated as osmotic palimpsests. Rather than accumulating as successive semantic layers, their meanings permeate one another and become active again in every present: the presents of past builders and users, of later communities, of ethnographic encounters, and of archaeological interpretation. A dry-stone wall may retain soil, channel movement, control grazing, express property, or participate in distinctions between “wild” and “tame.” These meanings may coexist, recede, migrate between contexts or return under altered conditions; the point is that they are always active, generating social arenas. Specific cases in the Ionian and the Aegean are examined under archaeological survey, ethnographic observation, oral testimony, local terminology and documentary research, within a hermeneutic spiral. Comparison consequently concerns relationships and transformations rather than formal analogies.

Microlandscapes, including microislands, become fields for examining how material and conceptual boundary conditions, through time, generate distinctive but historically coherent microcosms in osmotic pasts-in-presents, making social praxis inteligible.

The Beauty of the Marginal: Mediterranean Island Archaeology through the Mirror of the Contemporary

Francesco Iacono

Islands—and small islands even more so—have long been at the center of archaeological enquiry. Portrayed as paradigmatic remote places, their nature has been described either as an exception to the normal conduct of life (with remoteness becoming a metaphorical quality) or as the ideal finite laboratory to any dynamics between humans and the

environment. Curiously these perspectives correspond to some of the main tourist gazes described by John Urry long ago in his seminal work, *The Tourist Gaze* (1990). Is this resonance only superficial, or is there more to the relationship between island archaeology and tourism? To what extent have islands become central because they occupy a special position in the western imaginary essentially grounded in tourism, and to what extent do such perspectives allow us to get closer to real islands? At the same time, because of their biogeographical constraints, islands are ineluctably shaped by restrictions and less-than-optimal resources in need of careful management. Such perspectives can be seen to clash somewhat with the previously described escapist gaze, despite islands combining both remoteness and exceptionality with resource scarceness. In this paper, through the Bronze Age record of Mursia on Pantelleria, I explore how everyday island reality was arguably prosaic and fundamentally concerned with managing finite resources. Yet the tourist and academic gazes that mirror one another hold cultural significance: they embody an appreciation of environmental distinctiveness grounded in millennia of human adaptation to island constraints. Rather than oppose escapism to material reality, it is possible to ask: could it be that the aesthetic valuing of islands might have emerged precisely from their marginality.

SESSION 2: Ecology and Biogeography

Rock Islands: Scraps of Eden or Frankenstein's monsters?

Spyros Sfenthourakis

If people cannot live on a natural elevation, then there is much to suggest that it is a rock and not an island – size does not matter in this regard

Prof. Nele Matz-Lück, 2018

(*unizeit*, 'What is an island? And what is the difference between a rock and an island?')

I am a rock, I am an island

Simon & Garfunkel, 1966

(*I am a rock*, 'Sound of Silence')

Wikipedia lists some 333 genres of rock music, and one might combine them to produce an even longer list. Be it as it may, such a list cannot match the variety of kinds of 'rock islands' along Earth's oceans. Even if we focus solely on the Greek seas, with its ca. 9,000 islands (excluding the few hundreds of large and/or populated ones), we shall encounter a huge variety of genres. In fact, literally each islet differs from all others! And I do not refer only to topography or geology, for which we might devise a typology, but mostly to the composition of biota. Believe it or not, each islet hosts a unique set of plants and animals (not to mention fungi and microorganisms, for which we are ignorant), in both species composition and morphological variation. Islets vary tremendously also in their 'insular age', distance from nearest large island or mainland, and area, all important factors of biotic diversity. But is this diversity purely stochastic? Or can we predict their biota, at least partially? Are they broken pieces of a larger, balanced and predictable Eden, or are they a patchwork of whatever elements could be collected from surrounding lands, the equivalents of Frankenstein's monster? And what can the answers to such questions tell us about our modern and future society's ways and actions? Let the music play…

Deportatio ad insulam: The Costs of the Special Island Life

Panayiotis Pafilis

"Here am I, your special island!
Come to me, come to me!"
Rodgers & Hammerstein, 1949
(Bali Ha'i, 'South Pacific')

Islands are renowned for hosting unique biodiversity. Through speciation—a crucial evolutionary process—they serve as the cradle for thousands of species found only on these small patches of land surrounded by the sea. Nonetheless, insularity comes with many costs. Island endemics, as well as insular populations of species with a mainland distribution, deviate in many ways from the continental norms. Simpler island biocommunities harbor fewer predators and competitors, thereby making life easier, at least at first glance. However, the absence of risks leads to higher densities, resulting in harsh intraspecies competition, which is further exacerbated by the scarcity of resources. At the same time, high winds and stormy weather exert a constant pressure on habitats with fewer shelters. This is more evident on small islands and islets. In order to survive, islanders adopted a constellation of adaptions. Island Syndrome, the Island Rule, Island Naivety and Marine Subsidies are some of the principles used by Island Biogeography—a branch of Ecology—to describe these modifications in island wildlife. In this paper, I discuss dwarfs, giants, cannibals, melanistic individuals, meek populations, all of them special, all of them islanders.

Natura artis magistra: Two Biogeographical Stories with Bee and Hoverfly Pollinators from the Aegean

Theodora Petanidou

Drawing firm conclusions in natural sciences, like biology and biogeography, requires rigid diagnostic tools such as field data, molecular analysis, GIS, advanced statistics. But to what extent are these conclusions related to history, human geography and living? Here we present two biogeographical studies and their possible association with humanities.

Empirical findings showed that bees in the Aegean obey the "island rule", as they get smaller with decreasing island size (Kaloveloni, 2020). This may imply that insect-pollinated plant species in the Archipelago bear smaller flowers compared with their mainland conspecifics, especially considering that wind-pollinated plants do not obey the island rule. While this hypothesis enjoys partial support within the Aegean Basin, there is parallel evidence that seed outcome (weight) of insect-pollinated edible plants (viz. *Vicia faba*) increases with the size of the islands. I conclude that in the Mediterranean pollinator body-size has co-evolved vis-à-vis plant flowers and seeds, a result that brought about the many names of small fava beans in the Aegean, such as *mikrokoukkia*, *misiriotakia*, etc.

A second empirical study, also from the Aegean, documented how human needs and related activities have affected phylogeographic patterns of pollinators, this time regarding hoverflies, the group second in importance for pollination after bees. Focusing on *Merodon* species, Ståhls et al. (2016) showed that the Mid-Aegean-Trench (MAT) does not represent an effective geographical barrier for all short-distance flying species, some of them sharing haplotypes in both sides of the MAT (e.g. Delos and the eastern Aegean islands). Shedding light to this paradox, required exploring ancient Greek scholars, in particular Dioscodes Pedanius, revealing that in historical times bulbous plants, particularly of the genus *Muscari*,

the *Merodon* larval hosts and delicacies consumed until today, were systematically traded from Libya to Greece, certainly to Delos, a noted hub within the market networks of the eastern Mediterranean.

The Ecology of Insularity in Dynamic Nearshore Landscapes

Natalie D. Munro and Nicholas Andrés Gonzalez

Much discussion of Mediterranean insularity focuses on fully formed islands and the challenges they posed for human dispersal and adaptation. Less attention has been given to nearshore landscapes that became partially isolated as sea levels rose, coastlines shifted, and small water gaps formed between formerly connected landmasses. These transformations did not necessarily prevent hominin movement, but they could nevertheless impact the ecological conditions in which hominins lived.

This paper approaches insularity as a gradient ecological condition rather than a fixed geographical category. Even where water gaps did not substantially impede hominin movement, they could reorganize species distributions, resource availability, and predator–prey relationships. Ecological insularity and human mobility therefore did not necessarily coincide: landscapes might remain accessible and socially connected while becoming increasingly differentiated ecologically. We explore this problem through the Pleistocene landscapes of the Ionian Sea, where fluctuating sea levels repeatedly changed the relationship between islands, nearshore environments, and the mainland.

These settings provide a useful context for examining how partial isolation and changing connectivity may have structured the adaptive environments hominins encountered. We consider how degrees of ecological insularity may have shaped the resources and risks available to Pleistocene hunter-gatherers, focusing on the changing ecological consequences of connectivity and separation.

SESSION 3: Reaching Small Islands in Early Prehistory

Small Islands: The Peaks of a Sunken Prehistoric Landscape

Peny Tsakanikou and Dimitris Sakellariou

The relationship between human activity and landscape structure is not unidirectional. It is rather an enduring, interrelated dialectic between geomorphological architecture and anthropogenic responses to it. Over evolutionary and archaeological timescales, human activities adapt to the natural landscape, modify it, and take advantage of available affordances, initiating a long-term socio-ecological feedback loop.

The present geographic and morphological configuration is nothing but a snapshot of the perpetually changing shape of the Earth's surface, due to (i) endogenic (tectonics, volcanism, isostacy etc.) and (ii) exogenic (climate changes, meteorological processes etc.) processes acting simultaneously, albeit in different spatial and time scales. Periodical, climatically driven sea-level changes, competing with long term, isostatic, tectonic and volcanic, vertical and horizontal land movements (uplift/subsidence), along with erosional and depositional processes, modify the Earth's surface continuously ensuring that the present configuration differs substantially from the one at different moments in the

Paleolithic period. In that sense, small islands are geological/geomorphological features with positive relief, created by tectonic or volcanic processes with their peaks standing higher than the present sea level. However, the sea level has been almost always lower than the present one during the Quaternary (last 2.5 Myrs) by many tens of meters. Thus, for long periods in the past, the present small islands were only the highest peaks of larger islands or even larger land masses, that are now drowned by the recent sea level rise. Taking into consideration the vertical tectonic or volcanic land movements, it is possible that the submerged, former exposed, landscapes surrounding the small islands may extend at depths reaching hundreds of meters.

In the case of the tectonically active regions of the Aegean and Ionian seas, rather than serving as passive backdrops, landscape structures functioned as primary geomorphological drivers that actively shaped the distribution of ecological affordances, altering between extended subaerially exposed shelves and restricted insular environments. These shifts initiated adaptive challenges to prehistoric populations affecting dispersal potential and triggering technological advances/ breakthroughs (e.g. early seafaring) or prompting targeted subsistence strategies (intensified exploitation of coastal and marine ecozones). Accounting for these deep-time geographic dynamics collapses the traditional terrestrial – insular dichotomy. This perspective reframes our interpretation of early insular (or previously terrestrial?) evidence and mandates interdisciplinary archaeological methodologies to bridge terrestrial, coastal and submerged landscapes.

Small Islands, Big Steps: How to Reach the Opposite Shore in the Pleistocene

Christina Papoulia

Often acting as stepping stones, small islands have played a pivotal role in the emergence and development of maritime technologies and have significantly enriched our understanding of the global origins of seafaring. Crossing waterscapes has been a defining challenge throughout human prehistory, from swimming and floating to the construction of buoyant vessels and increasingly sophisticated watercraft. Long distance sea voyages represent a major milestone, reflecting marine adaptations, technological innovation and careful planning.

Although the oldest boats are about 10.000 years old, the Late Pleistocene colonization of Sahul and the western Pacific islands suggests repeated, purposeful sea crossings using vessels capable of carrying a viable breeding population, long before the earliest preserved boats. In the Mediterranean, consumption of marine resources and the use of seashells as tools underline marine adaptive strategies, while fishing and diving are now regarded as an integral part of the Neanderthal lifestyle. Tool-bearing deposits identified on islands date as early as the Middle Pleistocene. Intervisibility and short distances created favorable conditions for maritime experimentation between opposite shores.

This paper examines current hypotheses concerning boatbuilding technologies, navigation, and the role of small islands in the development of Pleistocene maritime dispersals. Drawing on archaeological, experimental, and ethnographic evidence, it explores the technological, cognitive, and social dimensions of maritime travel. Recent findings from an experimental archaeology project, offer new insights into palaeolithic “naval engineering” techniques. Together, these lines of evidence demonstrate how the challenge of reaching the opposite shore fostered technological innovations and laid the foundations for long-distance voyages and the emergence of fully developed maritime traditions.

Imprints of boats in Archaeological Remains from Small Islands

Hein B. Bjerck

Although boats are rare among archaeological remains, there is no doubt: islanders possessed and frequently used boats. Naturally, the archaeological focus is what is seen—artifacts, settlements, dwellings, and fireplaces. For most sites at islands, there also must have been boats at the nearby shorelines. However, boats are not observed directly, and hence seldom get the attention they deserve. For the ancient islanders this might have been the opposite. They depended on this thing in sustaining life in the archipelagos, economy, transport, communication, and also for safe travels in seas they needed to cross or harvest. For life and daily routines in the archipelagos, the boat was pivotal and presumably contributed to shape activity patterns, routines, and material remains. Indirectly, the boat and its role left an imprint on archaeological settlements. And perhaps more distinct in mobile living on small islands in cold water archipelagos, as dwellers here were even more dependent on seaworthy vessels in sustaining a livelihood.

First and foremost, the imprint of boats is observable in location of settlements in landscape and seascape, places favourable for landing and launching, safe harbours. Boats also influence routine activity patterns: many activities (procurement, toolmaking, etc.) are difficult to do on board and must await firm ground. Additionally, there are routines in preparing for the next seafaring. Thus, islanders need to standardize routines that in turn shape the material composition of both living settlements and archaeological remains on abandoned sites. Also, the construction, size and carrying capacity of boats may affect timing and mobility patterns and even size of residential units. The presentation will include both ethnographic and archaeological remains to illustrate human-boat relations in small-island dwelling.

Mesolithic Seafaring in the South-Central Mediterranean

Eleanor Scerri, Nicholas C. Vella, and Mario Mata-González

The discovery that Mesolithic hunter-gatherers undertook single-stage, long-distance sea voyages in the Mediterranean has brought the south-central Mediterranean island region into sharp focus. Navigating, reaching, and surviving on small, semi-arid islands after crossing substantial stretches of open water demands a re-evaluation of how we understand Mesolithic mobility, maritime knowledge and social connectivity. It also raises fundamental questions about how hunter-gatherers interacted with and transformed island ecosystems during the early Holocene.

Here, we examine the biogeography, ecology and environmental history of the Central Mediterranean islands, considering how their resources, landscapes and changing climatic conditions may have shaped the possibilities and constraints of human settlement and movement. We bring together archaeological, palaeoecological, palaeoclimatic and genetic evidence to assess how hunter-gatherers were able to survive on these islands, and what this evidence reveals about connections within and across the Strait of Sicily. Particular attention is given to the potential movement of people, plants, animals and knowledge between islands and mainland regions, and to the extent to which such connections may have been sustained over time.

By integrating evidence from disciplines that are often considered separately, we explore the Central Mediterranean as an interconnected maritime landscape rather than a series of

isolated islands. This perspective provides new insights into the capabilities and strategies of early seafaring communities, while also highlighting the ecological consequences of their movements. Ultimately, we ask what the island record can reveal about the emergence of long-distance seafaring and the changing relationship between Mediterranean hunter-gatherers and their environments.

Small Islands, Big Islands, and Seafaring by *H. sapiens* in the Mediterranean

John F. Cherry

The recent discovery of a Mesolithic site at Latinja in northern Malta, with initial occupation at 8.5 kya, has generated considerable interest, not only among archaeologists, but also in the popular media. Why is this so, when the new evidence pushes back the first indications of humans on Malta only by around one millennium? The reason may be the way this discovery had been presented as the first example of the colonization of a small, remote Mediterranean island by hunter-gatherers, with the associated claim that it "upends the established notions that small and remote islands were beyond reach in the Mesolithic world."

This paper seeks to provide some wider context for these new data. It first considers the terms "small" and "remote," before panning out to the broader picture of *H. sapiens* activity on Mediterranean islands prior to the arrival of the first maritime farmers. Current evidence suggests that there is a yawning gap—as much as 25,000 years—between the latest evidence of *H. sapiens* on the northern mainland shores of the Mediterranean and the earliest secure indications of island occupation, a pattern that is strikingly different from that in Southeast and East Asia during MIS 3 and early MIS 2. In the Mediterranean, the high mobility and large range sizes required by Eurasian Pleistocene hunter-gatherers likely made most islands sub-optimal for permanent settlement until the advent of broad-spectrum subsistence adaptations in the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene, resulting in a rash of Mesolithic sites across much of the basin on islands both very large and very small. New evidence of earlier island colonizations could readily subvert such a picture, but as yet we do not have any.

SESSION 4: Comparative Case Studies in Small-Island Systems

The Inner Ionian Archipelago Survey: A Hybrid Small Island Archaeology Project above and below Sea-Level

Nena Galanidou, Maria Gatsi, Jeannette Forsen, Christos Chatzimpaloglou, Giorgos Iliopoulos, Andreas Kapetanios, Leonidas Koutsoumpos, Andreas Magganas, Cathy Morgan, Despina Nazou, Christina Papoulia, Dimitris Sakellariou, Vivian Staikou, Olga Tzortzakaki, Antonis Vasilakis, Myrto Veikou, Olympia Vikatou, and Panagiotis Zervoudakis

The Inner Ionian is a shallow, semi-enclosed sea delimited by the Greek mainland to the east and the islands of Lefkas, Kefalonia, and Ithaca to the west. This region offers a wealth of marine and freshwater resources, coastal lowlands along an intricate shoreline, and a complex inland topography. Conversely, it is characterized by limited arable land, seasonal and perennial wetlands, excellent quality flint, and a karstic landscape featuring caves, rock shelters, and dolines—some of which are now partly or totally submerged.

To investigate the diachronic connections between these smaller islands and the larger landmasses of the Ionian Sea from the Palaeolithic to modern times, an intensive surface survey, coupled with small-scale excavation, was initiated in 2010. Undertaken as a multifaceted collaboration between the University of Crete and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, the project set out to reconstruct the history of human presence and uncover the motivations and activities of early settlers in the Teleboides—the northern cluster of the Inner Ionian islands.

Terrestrial archaeological coverage included Meganisi, Thileia, Kythros, Tsokari, Petalou, Nisopoula, Phormikoula, Madouri, Arkoudi, and Atokos. Across three field campaigns (2010–2012), systematic fieldwalking covered just under 7 km² and yielded approximately 20,000 portable finds. Moving beyond traditional archaeological fieldwork, the project integrated palaeogeographical investigations—incorporating seabed mapping, coastal history reconstruction, and geological mapping—to identify the natural attractors that drew early human groups to this part of the Ionian Archipelago. Finally, these findings were synthesized with social anthropological and ecological data to trace the dynamic transformation of the local economy from one rooted in resource extraction to a tourism-driven model. Ultimately, the Inner Ionian Archipelago survey constitutes a hybrid small-island investigation characterized by an expansive historical scope and a robust interdisciplinary spine.

The Small Cycladic Islands Project: Miniature Landscapes and Regional Histories

Alex R. Knodell and Demetrios Athanasoulis

The Small Cycladic Islands Project (SCIP) is a diachronic archaeological survey of several small, currently uninhabited islands in the Cycladic Archipelago of the Aegean. The project is a collaboration between the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades, the Norwegian Institute at Athens, and Carleton College, and from 2019 to 2024 carried out comprehensive archaeological surveys of 87 small islands. These islets revealed a range of habitation and non-habitation activities, spanning prehistory to the present. This paper provides an overview of the work of the project as a whole, with a focus on our most recent work in the eastern and southern Cyclades. In particular, it examines how the miniature landscapes of small places can be viewed together to make new contributions to the regional history of the Cyclades. It also highlights the methodological contributions of the project in combining systematic pedestrian survey with lidar analysis and other types of remote sensing and digital recording. A broader concern is developing an archaeology of uninhabited spaces and in-between places that have long been overlooked, but nevertheless played crucial roles in wider networks.

No Island Is an Island: Community Viability in the Early Prehistoric Cyclades

Michael J. Boyd, David Smith, Jill Hilditch, Marie Floquet, Tristan Carter, Kyra Bombardier, Hallvard Indgjerd, Rosie Campbell, Demetris Athanasoulis, and Evi Margaritis

Fifteen years ago, the island of Keros seemed a poor lens through which to view the cadence, character and trajectory of long-term insular community-building. While “the world’s earliest maritime sanctuary” is of exceptional interest for understanding the development of Cycladic identity and character, it might seem far removed from the everyday concerns of settlement and subsistence. Thus, in the broader historical dynamics of the Cyclades in the third millennium, Keros could seem more exceptional than representative.

Owing to its geographical position at centre of the Cyclades and the import of almost all its material resources, Early Bronze Age Keros was already viewed as highly connected. Broodbank had previously offered one vision of socially constructed insular connectivity in his *Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades* (2000). Since then, a wealth of new survey, excavation and material evidence has provided the opportunity to adopt a more granular approach to connectivity, communication and mobility. Our emerging understanding of Keros' resilience involves a complex interaction of people, process and condition, across scales: a model in which viability and sustainability might depend on a walk along the northwest coast as much as a journey to a nearby island; where community scale may be distributed, node by node, over land and sea.

Now, new data posit the origin of this community (or communities) in the earlier part of the fourth millennium BCE. The island of Keros was home to a networked population generations before ritual activity in the area of the Special Deposits or proto-urbanisation on Dhaskalio became regionally significant. Far more than a stage on which the sanctuary emerged, to understand how Keros became exceptional, we need first to understand how successive communities made life there viable.

Landscape research is beginning to illuminate the subsistence strategies by which life on this resource-poor island persisted, and ceramic evidence suggests that inter-island connectivity in the fourth millennium was already operating at spatial scales partly comparable to those of the third millennium. Novel seafaring technologies created opportunity for change, and the rhythm and character of communication shaped the identities, places and perspectives of all involved. The critical questions revolve around the scale and tempo of connectivity, and the extent to which it acted as a catalyst in the transformation of society.

This paper sketches a vision of dynamic networks of connected communities through time. It explores what processes made island life viable and resilient, and how the affordances of small island environments and adaptive choices were reproduced and transformed across generations into new forms of collective, and ultimately institutional, organisation. One result, among others, was the emergence of phenomena both singular and formative in the Aegean.

Καὶ τὴ Ῥήνειαν ἑλὼν ἀνέθηκε τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ Δηλίῳ.
An Island Dedicated to Delian Apollo: The Enduring Ties between Delos and Rheneia

Zozi Papadopoulou and Vangelis Samaras

The paper will examine aspects of the relationship between Delos and Rheneia from the Archaic period to modern times. The identification of the entire island of Delos as a sacred place, owing to the birth of Apollo there, rendered its boundaries fluid and, by extension, affected those of neighboring Rheneia, with which it was inextricably linked. Following the dedication of part of Rheneia to Delian Apollo by Polykrates of Samos, the territory of Delos extended beyond the geographical limits imposed by the sea itself. This relationship had implications not only for the territorial integrity of the city-state of Rheneia, but also for the identity of the inhabitants of Delos, who, from a certain point onwards, were born and buried on the neighboring island. Of particular interest in exploring the enduring relationship between the two islands is the extension, already in antiquity, of the name Delos to refer to both islands.

Previous research has raised important questions concerning the location and extent of the agricultural estates owned and leased out by the sanctuary of Apollo on Rheneia, the location of the two Delian sanctuaries on the island, the exploitation of local resources, including stone quarries, the means of communication between the two islands, and their connections with the surrounding region and beyond. These and other questions will be reconsidered in light of preliminary findings from the Rheneia Archaeological Project (RAP), which the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades has been conducting in recent years. RAP has already made it possible to identify, with reasonable confidence, several farmsteads associated with the sanctuary's estates known from the inscriptions, while additional archaeological evidence is beginning to suggest a broader pattern of organization and management of a substantial part of the island by the sanctuary. By bringing together the rich epigraphic record and the emerging archaeological evidence, the paper will explore how the close relationship between neighboring small islands could shape their functions, economic organization, and landscapes in a diachronic perspective.

Stepping Stones within Sight of Land: Preliminary Results of the Little Islandscapes of the Saronic Project (LISP), 2024–2026

Christopher Nuttall, Axel Frejman, Myrto Veikou, Aristeidis Varis, Giorgos Stergiou, Jovan Kovačević, and Maria Rousou

The Little Islandscapes of the Saronic Project (LISP) is a multidisciplinary archaeological survey, conducted under the auspices of the Swedish Institute at Athens since 2024, which investigates the long-term history of human activity on the small islands and islets of the Saronic Gulf. These are near-mainland islands, lying within sight of Attica, Corinthia and the Argolid and in the shadow of Aegina and Salamis, in one of the busiest maritime corridors of the Aegean. Most are uninhabited today, and none had previously been systematically surveyed.

This paper presents the aims, methods and principal results of the project’s first four field seasons on Agistri and the islets of Doroussa, Panagitsa and Kyra, where intensive pedestrian survey has been combined with gridded collection, digital recording, aerial documentation and geomorphological assessment. The results reveal a discontinuous history of activity from prehistory to the recent past, closely linked to anchorages, cultivable land, defensible ground and raw materials. The same periods recur from island to island, suggesting that activity across the group rose and fell in step with wider regional developments.

The paper uses these results to consider what it means to be a small island so close to the mainland and to larger neighbours. Proximity meant that these islands were rarely isolated, and their use was repeatedly shaped by the communities and powers around them. These drew the islands in as agricultural hinterlands, landing places, stopping points along sea routes and positions from which those routes could be watched.

The Historical Atlas of Greek Micronesia (HAGMi) Project: A Diachronic Approach of the Cultural Environment of the Greek Archipelago

Georgios Koutzakiotis, Konstantinos Sarantidis, and Georgios Tataris

The world of the Greek Archipelago is micro-insular par excellence, as pointed out by the historian Spyros Asdrachas. This is quantitatively confirmed by the region’s geography. According to data collated by the Hellenic Navy Hydrographic Service, the Hellenic

Republic comprises more than 7,500 island territories in the Aegean, of which a mere 75 are larger than 10 km2. Our contribution attempts to address a series of epistemological questions by drawing upon the experience of the research project HAGMi (Digital Historical Atlas of Greek 'Micronesia'), which focused on the case study of the northern part of the Dodecanese during the biennium 2024-2025 —an area characterised by a large number and high density of small insular territories (248 island territories with an area below 10 km2). The presentation is divided into two parts. The first presents the methodology developed to tackle the series of epistemological questions posed, as well as the techniques employed for data collection in the investigation of Greek "micronesia" in general, and in the Northern Dodecanese in particular. The research consisted of four main stages: (a) geographical delimitation of the study area; (b) historical documentation of the study area; (c) field surveys (cartographic, archaeological, and toponymic); and (d) creation of the website (https://greekmicronesia.geo.aegean.gr/) and conference organization. The second part presents the research findings scrutinizing the cultural imprint on the islets of the study area according to the following thematic and chronological units, as follows: (i) the built environment from the Classical to Late Antiquity, (ii) the religious landscape from the Byzantine to the modern era, and (iii) architectural remains of the early modern and contemporary eras: aspects of folk culture and state infrastructure. Ultimately, the narratives composed contribute, as suggested by the social scientist Godfrey Baldacchino, to "a reclaiming, pan-archipelagic script of 'a world of islands."

SESSION 5: Settlement, Society and the Human Experience

Cultural Resources and Decolonization: Case Studies from Mauritius and Chagos

Krish Seetah

Mauritius served as a critical transitional hub along slave trading routes, as well as home to a significant number of enslaved people during the period of Dutch and French hegemony. Under the British, it staged the 'Great Experiment' witnessing the arrival of over 400,000 indentured workers who filled a labor void following abolition in the trade in slaves. Thus, it serves as an important stage for studying the contemporary legacies of colonialism, and how culture heritage can serve as a mechanism to tackle those enduring legacies.

Focusing on the island of Mauritius and the contested Chagos archipelago, the presentation outlines sites of work (plantations), as well as social practice (burial grounds), to shed light on the lifeways of laboring peoples during the period of colonialism. From this vantage point, the paper discusses the contemporary sovereignty dispute between the UK and Mauritius. It presents the ways that 'cultural resources' may serve as a means of providing support for the Chagossian community, their right to return to Chagos, and to provide opportunities to develop sustainable livelihoods built on a defined connection to place, traditional ecological knowledge, and their cultural heritage attributes.

Do Small Islands Look Different? Predictability, Constraint, and Choice in a Model of EBA Aegean Settlement

Rosie Campbell

A predictive model does not just locate potential sites, it measures how much of settlement location can be explained by environment alone, and how much is left to something else.

This paper argues that the gap between environmental prediction and where people actually settled is itself archaeologically meaningful, and that small islands and large islands sit at the opposite ends of this residual.

Modelling an Aegean gazetteer of 367 Early Bronze Age (EBA, 3200-2200 BCE) habitation sites across mainland coasts and islands of all sizes, using several benchmarked approaches (including MaxEnt, Random Forest, XGBoost, Convolutional neural networks, and LAMAP), habitation on small islands and islets is predicted with a higher confidence than habitation on large islands such as Naxos and Paros. Small islands typically offer few environmentally viable locations such as fewer harbours or limited land suitable for agriculture. One possibility is that where people settled is closer to environmentally determined, and the model is able to recover that logic more cleanly. Large islands offer many such locations, and which area was selected cannot be explained by environment to the same degree. Socio-political reasons such as alliances, proximity to trade partners, or the accumulated weight of generations of prior occupation, are perhaps doing more of the explanatory work.

Read this way, it raises a broader question for how small islands are positioned in Aegean prehistory. Rather than taken as simplified or data-poor versions of large-island settlement, they instead can potentially be used as contexts where the basic environmental grammar of EBA habitation is least obscured by social and historical elaboration. This paper explores what model predictability, which is usually read only as a technical performance metric, might offer as a way of thinking about where environmental constraint gives way to social choice, and invites discussion on what that would mean for how small islands are understood relative to their larger neighbors.

Evidence for Seasonality in the Bronze Age Settlement on Chryssi off the Southeastern Coast of Crete

Chrysa Sofianou, Thomas M. Brogan, Melissa S. Eaby, and Demetra Mylona

This paper explores the topic of time and seasonality in the Bronze Age habitation and exploitation of the small island of Chryssi (4.75 km sq), located 15 km off the south coast of Crete. The subject was first addressed in a Heidelberg dissertation by Kostas Chalikias exploring the diachronic settlement and use of Chryssi as a window into the similar histories of several of Crete's small, peripheral islands (e.g., Gavdos, Koufonisi, Dionysades, Pseira and Dia). This work helped set in motion rescue excavations by Vili Apostolakou and the Lasithi Ephorate of the Greek Ministry of Culture in 2008 and 2009 and subsequent systematic excavation by Chryssa Sofianou for the Ephorate since 2015.

The survey provided an excellent overview of the topic of visitation and habitation on Chryssi from the Neolithic to the modern era; more specifically, it demonstrated activity from ca. 3500-1450 B.C., followed by a gap of approximately 1200 years until activity resumed in the Hellenistic period. Of equal importance was the inclusion of an ethnographic study in which several fishermen were interviewed who outlined the use of the island over the last 150 years: during this time, it was used primarily as a seasonal base for fisherman, shepherds and a few farmers, only one of whom built a small house; and for the last 25 years building and agricultural exploitation of the island have been strictly prohibited as part of the European Natura program.

The results of the survey and excavations suggest that the island was visited frequently but rarely occupied permanently—a pattern also observed on the other peripheral islands. The

two phases showing the most robust signs of activity at Chryssi are the Palatial periods of the Cretan Bronze Age and the Hellenistic-Roman periods. Were these settlements, however, permanent or rather simply intensive but temporary or seasonal? And, if the latter, for how much of the year and at what time? Our paper reviews Middle and Late Bronze Age evidence from the survey and excavation in an attempt to answer how long and why this pattern was the exception rather than the norm for Crete's small peripheral islands.

Samothrace: A Big Small Island

Bonna Wescoat and Dimitris Matsas

Physical scale, essential resources for habitation, connectivity, and international sacred attraction all signify the opportunities for Samothrace to be a prosperous, well-connected, medium-sized Aegean island. Yet, the island imaginary differs from this robust description. Authors who describe the island from Antiphon (5th century BCE) to Ion Dragoumis (1906) and into the present dwell on aspects of isolation, ruggedness, and self-sufficiency that conjure up the impression of a spare island, one small and far away. In this paper, we explore how this shape—real and imagined—of remoteness and impression of small scale that surrounds Samothrace was created. Two narratives emerge: one connected with the sea and the other with the mountain.

Accessibility kept Samothrace a remote island. Until recently, lack of harbor, challenging currents, and strong winds shielded the island, even as it formed a visual touchstone across the northern Aegean. While the Samothracians were valiant sailors (Herodotos), they did not (choose to?) become a naval power. Rather, the sea narrative was dominated by outsiders: Minoan traders, prospective initiates to the cult of the Great Gods, Macedonian kings, Roman dignitaries, Gattilusi merchants, extractive monks from Mt. Athos, and Ottoman naval forces. For many, Samothrace was a means to secure passage elsewhere. For others, the island became a place of exile. The rise of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods to an international sacred center represents an exceptional moment of connectivity, one which likely will be strengthened by investigation of the unexcavated ancient city of Samothrace established by Greek settlers adjacent to the sanctuary on the NW coast.

The other narrative belongs to the mountain ridge and alluvium that make the island. Neolithic and Bronze Age farmers inhabited the SW alluvial plain. Early Iron Age Thracians settled at elevations giving access to both arable land and the mountain. Classical and medieval islanders had small agrarian settlements clustered around the rivers turned toward the mountain. As a mainstay, the local communities drew sustenance and self-sufficiently from the mountain and its slopes rather than the surrounding Aegean corridors. Only the arrival of refugees from Asia Minor in 1922 reopened the sea-window to the island.

More than size, successive social and economic challenges to the island's resources and community have hardened the small island narrative. The self-sufficiency Dragoumis admired was a survival strategy. Today that same quality may be effectively marshalled to safeguard the island's heritage and natural features while building its connectivity.

Powerful Small Islands in Byzantine 'Seas of Agency'

Myrto Veikou

Eastern Mediterranean islands were a vital part of the Byzantine empire during Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Therein, small islets have often been leveraged, either by

the State or by local agents and communities, into devices for achieving connectivity, defense and economic growth. The present paper offers a discussion of the two theoretical concepts of insularity and islandness, developed within natural/human geography and historical studies, in connection with examples of offshore and satellite islets inhabited by the Byzantines. It particularly explores spatial performativity, as well as its entanglements with size and location, connectivity, geomorphology, natural and human resources, local and regional economy, and cultural background. It mostly focalizes the tiny landmasses surrounded by sea, with a 'view from the water' hence emphasizing both the maritime context and the archipelagic structure of the eastern Mediterranean basin as determining factors of the longevity of the Byzantine empire. This discussion is based on examples of offshore and satellite islets from the late antique and medieval eastern Mediterranean.

The Role of Small Islands in the Organization of the Cycladic Archipelago during the Early Middle Ages

Demetrios Athanasoulis

Small rocky islets in the open sea, lacking the natural resources needed for even basic subsistence, yet densely packed with settlement remains. Massive walls enclosing barren islets. Extensive settlements on harborless rocky outcrops. These images are emblematic of many small islands in the Aegean with documented remains of the medieval period.

During the turbulent Early Middle Ages, a period traditionally associated with the abandonment of coastal sites, dozens of inhospitable rocks lying off the inhabited islands of the Cyclades reveal a strikingly different picture. What was their use and function? What was their relationship with the larger islands? And how does their occupation relate to imperial policy for the administration of the Byzantine Empire's multi-island Aegean territory in the seventh and eighth centuries? This paper examines the strategic role of small islands in Byzantine naval networks and wider patterns of settlement in this crucial period of transition.

SESSION 6*:* Patterns and Idiosyncrasies of Life on Small Islands

Genomic Insights into Social Structure in an Ancient Population of Oceania

Lara R. Arauna, Michal Feldman, Selina Carlhoff, Kathrin Nägele, Adam Powell, Johannes Krause, Lawrence Kiko, Hallie R. Buckley, Rebecca L.Kinaston, and Cosimo Posth

The peopling of Oceania occurred in successive waves of expansion. Near Oceania was settled more than 50,000 BP by groups carrying Papuan-related ancestries, while East Asian-related ancestries reached Remote Oceania only around 3,000 BP during the Austronesian expansion. Later movements, among them the dispersal of Polynesian-speaking groups beyond the Polynesian triangle, created complex histories of contact and admixture across the archipelagos. Despite their apparent isolation, this demographic history shows that Oceanian islands were sustained by long-standing maritime networks. However, how these processes shaped their social organisation remains largely unknown. We present genomic analyses of 111 ancient individuals from the Namu burial site on Taumako (eastern Solomon Islands), a population with strong Polynesian cultural affiliations. New radiocarbon dates (400–40 BP) indicate that the site is younger than

previously reported, and the individuals buried there are genetically distinct from present-day Polynesian Outlier populations. Despite this, they exhibit a highly homogeneous ancestry profile, with roughly equal contributions from Papuan- and East Asian-related sources, alongside exceptionally dense networks of genetic relatedness within the burial site. Using genome-wide relatedness estimates, runs of homozygosity, and uniparental markers, we reconstruct extended pedigrees spanning multiple generations. These reveal structured mating systems characterized by frequent parental relatedness, and patterns consistent with female gene-flow between neighboring islands, suggesting regular mobility embedded within a stable local community. Our findings demonstrate how integrating genomic and archaeological data enables the reconstruction of fine-scale social structure within a single island settlement, providing new perspectives on how Oceanian communities organized social relationships in the recent past.

Small Communities and Volcanic Hazards in the Lesser Antilles Archipelago

Miriam A. W. Rothenberg, Jenni Barclay, and David M. Pyle

Situated both along a subduction zone and squarely within the hurricane belt, the Lesser Antilles archipelago faces more than its fair share of natural hazards. The communities that have occupied these islands over the past seven millennia have contended with numerous earthquakes, tropical cyclones, droughts, floods, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions. In some instances, such hazards have led to severe disruption and disaster; in others, they have been endured without provoking any apparent stress or discontinuity. We focus on the archaeological record of volcanic eruptions on three islands—Martinique, Montserrat, and St. Vincent—to explore how pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary populations have experienced these events and to showcase the adaptive strategies that have been employed to build targeted resilience. Eruptions occur frequently but unpredictably throughout the Lesser Antilles—there are twenty-one active and potentially active volcanoes along the island arc, and there were nine subaerial eruptions in the 20th century alone. The islands have always been highly interconnected, and networks of communication and travel up and down the archipelago have, at times, strengthened resilience to sudden hazards. In the pre-Columbian period, distributed subsistence strategies, a high degree of settlement mobility, and territories that extended as much between islands as within them all insulated communities against volcanically-induced disruption. Since the advent of the modern discipline of volcanology, a high degree of scientific literacy among island populations, robust disaster management plans, and community-based survivance strategies have produced similar advantages. Conversely, vulnerability to volcanic activity has been heightened by colonial inequality, political fragmentation, and the partitioning of the landscape into private property. Exploring the volcanic archaeology of the Lesser Antilles exposes the factors that mitigate or exacerbate vulnerability to an array of natural hazards, both within the Caribbean and in comparable islandscapes elsewhere.

Micro-Insularity Theories as Modern Politics

Eleftheria Zei

In this paper I argue that modern and contemporary theories of micro-insularity have been elaborated in particular political contexts. Dealing with questions of territoriality and state authority, nineteenth and early twentieth century geographic, ethnographic and historical theories of insularity—mainly French and German—have generally invested in two opposite themes: the theme of isolation and exclusion, and the theme of insularity as vital

space of the continent. Early twentieth century historians, geographers and ethnographers established micro-insularity as an analytical category very much related to the “island metaphor” of anthropologists, or, to go back further, to the “population isolates” of 19th c. biological and demographical theories, that selected their case studies mostly among the Indian Ocean, the Polynesia, or the Malay archipelagoes. In this perspective, remote or uninhabited isles and islets were studied as problematic territories, as places of political exile or as non-places (utopias).

On the other hand, under the impact of post-Braudelian Mediterranean theories and that of state power under globalization, contemporary island studies have integrated micro-insularity in a comprehensive archipelagic model. Thus, micro-insular worlds define different “archipelagoes in the Archipelago”, according to Patrice Brun, or various “Mediterranean seas” outside the Mediterranean, such as for example the Stockholm Archipelago or the Japanese Archipelago, where small and very small islands appear to have played—and are still playing—a capital role in modern and contemporary times as agents of global economic and cultural connection, territorialization, and political or military control.

Small Islands and the Making of the Red Sea Region

Roxani Margariti

The coherence of the Red Sea region, and in particular the usefulness of it as a geohistorical unit, are matters of historiographical debate, but there is little doubt that the Red Sea's regional unity must be understood as a historically contingent phenomenon. In other words, the Red Sea witnessed different degrees of regional integration in different historical eras. What role do islands, small islands, and archipelagoes play in the region's articulation and connectivity in specific historical moments and through time? This presentation examines the function of Red Sea islands as fishing and pearling grounds, quarries, maritime pastures, victualing stations, and navigational landmarks, with a particular emphasis on the evidence for the medieval and early modern periods. The main argument advanced is that small island resources and the islands' utility to *local* networks of knowledge, extraction of resources, and navigation have conferred to the region a significant degree of coherence and resilience over time, even in periods when broader transregional connectivity broke down.

Carceral Materialities and Memories of Exile on Mediterranean Islets

Evan Levine

Long associated with incarceration and exile, small Mediterranean islands served as ad hoc spaces for political and criminal confinement during the first millennium BCE. Under the Roman Empire, exile to small Mediterranean islands became an institutionalized punishment within a broader system of carceral mobility. Links between insular landscapes and carceral practice persisted throughout the Medieval and Early Modern periods, while the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries saw the establishment of prisons, internment camps, and other carceral institutions, often on islands with deep carceral histories.

This paper explores premodern and modern incarceration via two case studies centred on small Mediterranean islands: Gyaros in the Cyclades and the twin islands of Ventotene and Santo Stefano in the Tyrrhenian Sea. These islands present evidence for ancient carceral practice alongside more recent institutional imprisonment. The recurrence of carceral

practice on these islands has encouraged perceptions of carceral continuity, whereby the same qualities that made these islands suitable for exile in Antiquity predisposed them to similar uses in later periods, albeit under very different political circumstances.

Comparing these islands with others in the Mediterranean offers the opportunity to ask whether recurrent carceral use reflects persistent topographic, locational, or ideological affordances of small Mediterranean islands themselves and the extent to which material and mnemonic legacies of premodern exile can make particular island landscapes legible as appropriate sites for later carceral regimes. I argue that recurrent carceral practice can obscure significant differences: premodern and modern island carcerality relied on fundamentally different aspects of island topography, demography, and built environment to produce confinement. By disentangling these relationships, this paper offers an interdisciplinary framework for scholars of small islands to understand how insular carcerality is constructed, reproduced, and remembered, and how we might best integrate these themes into broader discussions of small island lifeways in the Mediterranean.

Rethinking Islandness in Greece: An Anthropological Approach to the Small Islands of the Aegean and Ionian Seas

Despina Nazou

This paper provides an anthropological investigation into the contemporary reality of micro-islands in the Aegean and Ionian Seas, focusing on their structural characteristics, their shifting relationships with larger regional centers, and their current socioeconomic functions. Small islands have long been treated in Mediterranean studies either as romanticized utopias or as isolated, marginalized peripheries. Moving beyond these dualisms, this study utilizes ethnographic data to examine how modern micro-insularity is lived, negotiated, and transformed.

The analysis begins by identifying the core structural and cultural characteristics of these spaces. The small demographic scale is marked by a chronically aging population and the critical phenomenon of winter desolation, contrasted sharply with intense summer hyper-tourism. Social life is dictated by a distinct sense of community where high social capital and informal solidarity networks are vital for survival, yet heavily strained by chronic resource scarcity (such as freshwater deficits and limited energy autonomy) and infrastructure deficits in healthcare and transportation. A central axis of this study is the exploration of the relational dynamics between small and large islands. Historically, large islands operated as administrative, financial, and medical hubs establishing a strict center-periphery dependency. I argue that this relationship is undergoing a profound transformation. While infrastructural dependency remains high, micro-islands are actively constructing new forms of cultural and symbolic autonomy. They increasingly bypass regional centers by leveraging their "unspoiled smallness" as a distinct brand in the global tourism market. Finally, I examine the current function of these micro-islands within the globalized landscape of the 21st century as dynamic arenas where local sustainable practices (like traditional fisheries or terrace farming) encounter global forces: the rapid expansion of alternative tourism, new waves of lifestyle migration (expatriates and digital nomads), and top-down environmental conservation policies (such as green-island transitions). Through this lens, the Aegean and Ionian micro-islands are redefined as fluid, hyper-connected, and resilient social landscapes following trajectories of continuous change.