

Wetland archaeology and movement II: travel and communications along waterways

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Water continuously moves. And so do humans, often seeking water or travelling on it. This session aims at exploring the intriguing relationship between water and the movement of people in antiquity. Specifically, we are curious about the movements of people along waterways within wider landscapes. Barry Cunliffe in his book 'Facing the Ocean' (2001, Oxford University Press) has clearly demonstrated that the combination of coastal and fluvial networks had comparable effects in both Western Europe and Mediterranean. Archaeologists have demonstrated interest in European wetlands, Mediterranean seascapes and other major waterways around the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, but there is the need to look at how water systems were integrated, or why they were not integrated, within patterns of movement and travel.

The chronological boundaries for this session include all ancient and pre-industrial societies around the world.

The connections between the Gulf of Mexico and the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca, México, from the early XVI century to the beginning of the independent period: the fluvial networks of the Papaloapan River

Edith Ortiz-Díaz

Social disciplines have long recognized the important role played by external contacts and trade on the developmental trajectories of societies. The existence of contacts throughout the central valley of Oaxaca and the Gulf Coast of México has been amply documented from 1500 BC. Examination of the distribution of Oaxaca materials along Gulf Coast sites (e.g. hematite mirrors) and Gulf Coast materials at Oaxacan sites (e.g. seashells) as well as the presence of similar styles prove such contacts. This paper focuses on how the proto-historic Zapotecs and Chinantecs of the early 16th century used the fluvial network to connect the Gulf of Mexico and the Sierra; and also how the colonial and independent Mexican people used these fluvial networks to engage the alluvial coast plain with the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca and other areas based on the available archaeological evidence and historical documents.

Dugouts from the center-south of Chile: sailing on trees

Nicolás Lira

This research is presented as a first approach to the study of indigenous navigation and their boats for the South Central region of Chile, and as an effort to systematize the findings on this subject that are spread and out of context in this area, with the aim of contributing to an understanding of the practices and technologies of indigenous sailing tradition and origin. In recent years a number of factors led to the discovery and extraction of dugouts in this area. This has not been done in most cases by specialists which has resulted in the lost of context of the pieces and the lack of systematic in the investigation. This paper tries to reverse this situation in part by developing an appropriate methodology for recording and analysis of indigenous traditional boats, and from this information develop a preliminary typological and chronological sequence for dugouts in south central Chile.

Low lands in South America

José López

For South American archaeology lowlands were always a marginal area for economic and cultural development. Nevertheless, the flood plains of Amazonas, Orinoco, Paraná, Matto Grosso and Merín Lagoon were the setting of an early complex culture. In recent years, intense research has revealed the historic process leading to the emergence of complex societies in the region. The environmental management resources were one of the keys of this original experience. Social and environmental co-evolution was one of the central points to explain the changes in social mobility, settlement patterns, economic innovation and new political systems. This paper presents a comparative approach of South American low lands culture development with special attention to the Laguna Merín area in the southern American Atlantic coast.

Rise amidst the waves

Christina Fredengren

This paper will present the results of the excavations at Derragh townland, Co. Longford, Ireland. The Lake Settlement Project within the Discovery Programme has excavated a Mesolithic man-made platform that has been in use during a period of over 1500 years. The evidence shows that fires were lit on regular occasions, structures were built, abandoned, and remodelled. This paper discusses the significance of this place in its own right as a Mesolithic phenomenon where people have made a distinct mark and built a monument in a landscape of waterways. It has implications also for our understanding of place-memory. The site furthermore has bearing on discussions on the transition to the Neolithic in Ireland where people have made connections with earlier traditions to argue the news.

Reaching out across the water – travelling by dugout canoe in Mesolithic Ireland.

Claire Anderson

The Discovery Programme's Lake Settlement Project, under the direction of Dr. Christina Fredengren, excavated a late Mesolithic site at Derragh, Co. Longford. The site provided the first securely dated evidence for dugout canoe construction in Ireland. This was a highly skilled and specialised craft, suggesting a wealth of knowledge on the part of the Mesolithic people who lived here. Such vessels are well-documented in the Danish Ertebølle culture, and at experimental centres such as Lejre in Denmark. Possession of a dugout canoe implies a relationship with water which may have led people to seek it out, rather than merely exploit it occasionally. Large distances could have been covered quite easily, with all the additional social interaction, communication and economic possibilities which that implies. Clearly, water had immense importance in the social, cultural, economic and possibly even spiritual lives of Mesolithic populations in Ireland.

The archaeological potential of ponds – a case study from Cashel, County Tipperary

Joanne Hughes

Archaeological excavations in 2003 for the N8 Cashel Bypass have revealed for the first time the local importance of ponds as foci in the prehistoric period. Ponds occur widely across the limestone geology of the Cashel area, and previously unrecorded sites were discovered wherever a pond or its' environs was excavated. Remarkably, the archaeology was found to be multi-phased, with three sites alone having early / later Mesolithic, early Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity – the first definitive Mesolithic evidence in County Tipperary. This intensive and prolonged prehistoric activity within a radius of 3km around Cashel was the result of people specifically targeting and utilising the ponds as a constant, secure water source. The implication of these new discoveries for the known archaeological record will be discussed, and a

number of areas around Cashel such as Lough Nahinch and Loughnafina will be proposed for future research.

Interchanges between fluvial and marine communication networks in Bronze and Iron Ages Veneto, Italy

Andrea Vianello

This paper focuses on the movement of commodities and peoples in the region of Veneto. The Veneto was a key area between the Emilian Terremare and the lake-dwellings of Trentino, at the heart of a large communication and exchange system centred on lakes, rivers, lagoons, river mouths and sea. Movement on land before the construction of Roman roads appears of secondary importance. The Veneto was inserted in long-distance exchange networks at least since the Bronze Age. Such networks have brought in the region Aegean-type pottery during the Late Bronze Age, but more importantly exotic raw materials were imported, worked and exchanged at Frattesina. The ability of the ancient Veneti to move on waters was one of the principal reasons for their success, and their familiarity with water was then inherited by the Venetians and continued to be a key reason for the success of the region.

A river runs through it: understanding the role of waterways in Bronze Age Britain

Ben Roberts

Whilst research examining the movement of people bringing new ideas, foods, technologies and objects to Britain from overseas during later third - early first millennium BC has enjoyed a resurgence in recent years, the role of rivers in this process has lagged behind. This paper reviews the evidence for riverine communities, explores the inter-connections that shaped their existence and analyses their influence on communities further inland.

The oldest examples of clinker build vessels in Scandinavia - the Nydam Ships revisited.

Flemming Rieck

During the years 1989-99, the National Museum of Denmark carried out intensive excavations on the classical site of Nydam in Southern Jylland. Here the Nydam Boat was found in 1863 together with remains of two more ships and masses of weapons, personal equipment, tools, horses etc. The new excavations revealed approx. 15000 artefacts. Substantial new parts for the Iron Age vessels (190-320 AD) have been identified and analysed. This paper presents the results of this research.